

Relishing the Abject:
Gendered Identity and Intertextuality
in Selected Twentieth-Century Scottish Women's Fiction

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Declaration

I, Hsin-Ying Lin, declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Abstract

This thesis examines gender identity as explored by several twentieth-century Scottish women writers: A. L. Kennedy, Emma Tennant, Elspeth Barker, Jessie Kesson, Alice Thompson and Muriel Spark. The objective of the thesis addresses the thematic and cultural significance of the 'dangerous woman' as she appears in twentieth-century Scottish women's fiction. I analyse fiction that sentimentally considers the oppressions and sufferings of 'dangerous women' and that sensationally portrays the landscapes surrounding them. I plan to examine the twentieth-century writers' representations of 'dangerous women', concerning how 'pleasure' is depicted as empirically justified by conventional 'dangerous women' like Judith, the Biblical woman who can be conceived as a sexual warrior in scriptural writing; and how it is traditionally associated with the values of female masculinity as exemplified by the way in which gender subjection is justified. I further contend that twentieth-century Scottish women writers redefine the significance of the 'dangerous woman' by subverting the norms of 'pleasure' and by depicting this pleasure, through either Gothic or fantastic manifestation, as morally dangerous and psychologically destructive.

I set out the theoretical background for the relationship between gendered identity and the female Gothic from the perspective of Julia Kristeva's concepts of abjection and intertextuality. I contend that the ambivalence of the 'dangerous woman's' split self, particularly in the female Gothic, is a latent form of the contradictory pathos (fear and strength). This pathos results from the construction of a repellant subject's borderline (as articulated by Kristeva, an individual's recognition of what he/she is not or dislikes). Through a Kristevian analysis of intertextuality in these novels, I demonstrate how each writer's desire is either to soften female

resistance to the symbolic (paternal) order, or to examine male desire in a consolidation of the symbolic (paternal) order.

The characteristic features of the 'dangerous woman' may shift from more corporeal challenges to the 'essence', the 'presence' and therefore the 'centre' of gender; that is, to the emotional abjection of the inherent maternal side of herself. The central argument of this thesis is that just as post-structuralism attempts to explain the subjective construction of reality, so the six authors examined here emphasise the significance of individual's invention of reality. These selected texts demonstrate that reality can only be interpreted on an individual level: on how one interprets one's situation and on how one manipulates one's life. These authors not only examine the psychological status of marginalised women, but also interrogate the maternal abjection resulting from this marginalisation.

Introduction

This thesis examines gendered cultural performance and psychological resistance in fiction written by several twentieth-century female Scottish writers—A. L. Kennedy, Emma Tennant, Elspeth Barker, Jessie Kesson, Alice Thompson, and Muriel Spark. I emphasise the thematic and cultural significance of treating gender degradation psychologically, and argue that selected fictional scenes of gender abjection, in both their temporal and spatial dimensions, relate to and comment upon the cultural tensions surrounding gender identity in postmodern society, a society wherein norms of gender have often been ironically subverted through both their expression and presentation. These cultural tensions stem from two contradictory female desires: the first is concentrated upon one's self-esteem and the emotional satisfaction as a wife and mother within an egalitarian family, and the second is concentrated upon the consummation of a relentless desire for defying the unequal treatment of women in patriarchal institutions. The tension of female gendered identity is positioned at the precise point where these opposing tendencies meet: self-contradiction is the result. Therefore, it is the violation of or the internal violence towards maternity that ostensibly frustrates the first desire and leads to the second.

My intention in writing this thesis is to inquire if the character of the 'dangerous woman' in twentieth-century Scottish women's fiction functions as a vehicle for arousing the awareness of an unequal gender relationship, or is this type presented as a vehicle for psychic revolution? The aim of this thesis is to examine the ways in which the 'dangerous woman' has been represented in twentieth-century Scottish women's fiction. It also aims to consider the influences that the psychological problem of this type of 'dangerous woman' has produced in relation to different

cultural contexts. At first, I shall introduce the ambiguity of the border of the subject with Kristeva's interpretation. I will then elucidate how I plan to extend her theory of abjection into four sub-concepts, and how I will use the four sub-concepts as critical lenses to analyse the 'dangerous woman's' literary representation in several chosen texts. These will be A. L. Kennedy's *So I am Glad* (1996), Emma Tennant's *The Bad Sister* (1978) and *Two Women of London* (1989), Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia* (1991). As for Jessie Kesson's *The White Bird Passes* (1958), I will still specify the female protagonist's psychological complex (fear of gender degradation and psychological resistance to femininity) which the typical 'dangerous woman' carries, although the elemental characterisation of the 'dangerous woman' is not obvious in this novel. In Alice Thompson's *Justine* (1996) and *Pandora's Box* (1998), and Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), I will explore men's view towards the role of 'dangerous woman' from the perspective of the male psychological abjection.

Most of the chosen texts were written in the form of Gothic, except Jessie Kesson's *The White Bird Passes* and Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, wherein the caricature of the abnormal characters, such as social exiles or demonic rascals, also prevails. I will also incorporate some views of Gothic criticism to analyse these Gothic novels to foreground a contention of textual Gothic radicalism.¹ I will argue that this replacement of exterior modes of presentation with interior modes of introspection demonstrated in twentieth-century (Gothic) fiction by Scottish women

¹ Gothic radicalism is a term coined by Andrew Smith. Smith's reading of a particular Gothic tradition which spans the nineteenth century is one which observes the mutations and developments in an idealist tradition of thought, and which has its roots in the eighteenth century (represented by Burke's *Philosophical Inquiry*, 1757) and its terminus in the twentieth (represented by Freud's 'The Uncanny', 1919). Smith argues that the outward modes of perception demonstrated by the Gothic genre were replaced by a new emphasis on introspection in the nineteenth century, the roots of which can be found in Burke's account of the Romantic Sublime and its culmination in Freud's account of the unconscious. He indicates that this replacement produces an alternative Gothic tradition of the nineteenth century which attempts to grasp the limitations of the dominant intellectual culture of the century. In reference to, Smith, Andrew. 'Introduction'. *Gothic Radicalism: Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis in the Nineteenth Century*. (London and New York: MacMillan Press Ltd & St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000), pp. 1-10.

writers corresponds to a post-structuralist doctrine of anti-presentation. I propose that the way of psychoanalytic introspection of gender identity, demonstrated by the use of the (Gothic) fantasy, and the anti-presentation (irony) of the (Gothic) fantasy, corresponding to the poststructuralist device of intertextuality, foreground twentieth-century (Gothic) radicalism in a postmodern context. This postmodern context will be discussed after I explain why Kristeva's concept of abjection particularly contributes to the psychoanalysis of the fictional characters' (Gothic) fantasy and the writers' ultimate aim to mock this (Gothic) fantasy through their play of intertextuality.

The threatening or killing of the female body implies social 'monstrosity': those ideologies that perpetuate stereotypical gender roles as they deter men from nurture and destroy women through roles of self-denial. Ironically, the violation of the female body, no matter whether enacted by men or by women to themselves, enforces the threat of maternity and deepens the border between the repellant subject and its abject. In exploring these fictional works, I plan to show how the internal and physical violence enacted towards the female body exposes the problematic results of gender subjectivity. Through the reading of the selected texts, I provide fictional examples of sentimentally and sensationally based communities, and examine how the 'pleasure' of excluding what threatens a subject's gender identity can also, paradoxically, devastate a subject. I also discuss how twentieth-century Scottish women writers regard the significance of femininity, noting how they question the subverting norms of the 'pleasure' of excluding its 'Other within' and how they depict this abjection as morally dangerous through the psychoanalytic investigation of the semiotic (grammatical) dimension of the language.

'The Other Within' in the Semiotic of Language

In 'Discourse in the Novel', Bakhtin indicates that the word in language is half someone else's. Insisting upon the notion of the double, Bakhtin argues that in discourse there is always a rejoinder which leads such a double life. For Bakhtin, in the context of internal dialogisation, language always consists of its own utterances and of alien utterances. He argues:

One cannot excise the rejoinder from this combined context made up of one's own words and the words of another without losing its sense and tone. It is an organic part of a heteroglot unity. . . . dialogic inter-orientation becomes an event of discourse itself, animating from *within* and dramatising discourse in all its aspects.²

It should be stressed that Bakhtin's dialogism carries within itself two dimensions of self conceptualisation and social evaluation. Stressing the notion of 'the Other within', Bakhtin writes:

In the novel, the 'already bespoke quality' [ogovorennost] of the world is woven together with the 'already uttered' quality [peregovorennost] of language, into the unitary event of the world's heteroglot becoming, in both social consciousness and language.³

Such a double-voiced discourse, which emphasises the tension, conflict, or dispute between one and an other, is also called 'internally persuasive discourse' (by Bakhtin himself), or one which is characteristic of 'half-ours and half-someone else's'.⁴

Bakhtin's dialogism opens up a conversation between the speaker's recognition of the world through language, and a society's view on the partiality of this language.

Kristeva later extends Bakhtin's view and applies it to writing, arguing that the 'dialogism' inherent in writing involves the writer in the construction of his own

² Emphasis added. Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 284.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

absence. Split into the 'writing subject' ('subject of utterance') and the 'author' ('subject of enunciation'), the writer is 'drawn, and therefore reduced to a code, to a nonperson, to an *anonymity*'.⁵ In other words, the writing subject keeps a critical distance from the speaking subject, positioning itself as a fictional narrator or character and thereby achieving satirical purpose through the speaking subject's linguistic tone. Readers can observe the 'hidden' meaning (the real intention) of the speaking subject by analysing the grammatical function of the semiotic.

Anna Smith indicates that Kristeva links the feminine to the semiotic⁶ of poetic language, saying that women are strangers and exiles taking a borderline position between marginality and the possibility of transgression.⁷ Huntington similarly implies that Kristeva's semiotic theory attempts to explore 'the excluded feminine dimensions of language, e.g., nonmeaning, nonbeing, absence'.⁸ I want to argue here that we should use the notion of 'the Other within' in order to look at the semiotic dimension of language, referring not only to the woman's unconscious rejection of her own maternity, but also to man's conscious transgression over his familiar maternity; otherwise, errors of interpretation can often occur. Many critics, including Judith Butler⁹ for instance, in order to accuse Kristeva of essentialism, read the semiotic

⁵ In Kristeva's formulation, the birth of the 'author' happens at the moment when the writer dies into the text. Writing transforms the 'writer' into an 'author', who is a 'signifier', at the site of intertextual dialogue. See Kristeva, Julia. 'Word, Dialogue and Novel'. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 64-91 (74).

⁶ The semiotic is described as the state of being before consciousness in language is developed. Extending this to the linguistic analysis of humans' emotions and desires, Kristeva considers that the choice of words in the expression has already included the human pathos, according to the rhythmic sound, repetition, and rupture of sentences.

⁷ Smith, Anna. *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement*. (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), p. 6.

⁸ Huntington, Patricia. *Ecstatic Subjects, Utopia, and Recognition*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. xx.

⁹ Butler bases her reading of Kristeva's semiotic drives on the presupposition that they are assigned by Kristeva to 'their pre-Symbolic ontological status', and she jumps to the conclusion that Kristeva 'foreclose[s] the possibility of subversion' by 'relegating the source of subversion to a site outside of culture itself'. See Butler, Judith. 'The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva'. *Gender Trouble*. (London: Routledge, 1999 [1990]), p. 112.

chora as ‘unambiguously pre-cultural’.¹⁰ They do not have the notion of ‘the Other within’ and believe that there is a binary opposition between the semiotic and the symbolic. In fact, the relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic is not oppositional, but rather contingent. In *Desire in Language*, Kristeva provides a clear explanation of semiotic activity: for Kristeva, semiotic activity is both ‘a mark of the workings of drives (appropriation/rejection, orality/anal, love/hate, life/death)’ and of ‘the archaisms of the semiotic body’; thus, as they are both ‘instinctual and maternal’, ‘semiotic processes prepare the future speaker for entrance into meaning and signification (the symbolic)’.¹¹ Through its symbolic function, language operates ‘at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother’; however, through its semiotic function, language operates ‘at the cost of reactivating this repressed instinctual, maternal element’.¹² In other words, Kristeva believes that reading poetic language can offer access to the maternal body because poetic language can link disruptive movements of the biological drives, those which utter the movement of abjection, to the ‘subject’ of the text, or that which prescribes the identity of the self.

The Scottish ‘Dangerous Woman’

Scottish women, through their sex and nationality, have been doubly mythologised. As yet, no critic has shown a serious interest in tackling the subject with a view towards the ways in which women of the twentieth century are represented as both revolutionary and introspective in Scottish fiction. More than

¹⁰ Nooy agrees with Butler, saying that Kristeva ‘problematizes the same simplistic before/after, biology/culture distinction that Butler finds in her work’. See Nooy, Juliana. *Derrida, Kristeva, and the Dividing Line*. (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 268-269.

¹¹ Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language*. Ed. Leon Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 136.

¹² *Ibid.*

twenty years ago, one film and media critic wrote the following:

We must fight images of Scotland that are pleasurable only for people outside of Scotland, and we must fight representations in which women are stereotypes or function only as symbols of this or that: spirit of the nation; mother of the earth. These symbols only exist so that "man" can experience himself: his desire, his presence, his power.¹³

In more academic contexts, there are indications of a similar awareness concerning the mythologising of Scottish women. Margaret Elphinstone defines the concept of the 'dangerous woman' in writing about Scottish female writers. She claims that there are three crucial characteristics that define this recurring tropes of Scottish womanhood: firstly, evil equals glamour; secondly, the dangerous woman rejects the patriarchal world; and thirdly, her role has an influence on narrative tradition and theory.¹⁴ The socially protesting woman in the guise of the glamorous woman defies patriarchal authority in Scottish literature and this, in turn, has an impact on narrative tradition and theory. It is worthy of note that while influential aspects of this type have not yet aroused incisive critical discussions, they have provoked various fictional representations of gendered relationships in twentieth-century Scottish women's fiction. Elphinstone's claim fuels my own interest in the psychological state of this 'dangerous woman', and in the investigation of how her psychological reality overthrows traditional feminist criticism. The traditional feminist criticism surrounds the role of sexually aggressive heroine in Bible literature, and postulates that a sexual warrior like Judith as a powerful *femme fatale* in one Book of The Old Testament has deliberately subverted the Western ideology of an ideal woman and has thereby

¹³ 'Woman, Women and Scotland: "Scotch Reels" and Political Perspectives', an edited version by Gillian Skirrow of papers presented by Douglas and Ouainé Bain during the Scotch Reels Debate at the 1982 Edinburgh International Film Festival, published in *Cencrastus*, 11 (New Year 1983): 3-6. p. 5.

¹⁴ Elphinstone, Margaret. 'Contemporary Feminist Fantasy in the Scottish Literary Tradition'. *Tea and Leg Irons: New Feminist Readings from Scotland*. Ed. Caroline Gonda. (London: Open Letters, 1992), pp. 42-59.

undermined the patriarchal exploitation of women's sexuality.¹⁵ Stocker's view over-emphasises the notion of masculinity and mistakenly distracts the image of revolutionary woman in gender relationship. My fundamental inquiry of this thesis is that whether or not a 'dangerous woman' like Judith (or a male figure with Judith's repellant mind in gender relationship) can substantially release themselves from the pain and nightmare through their destruction of what they detest.

Certainly, the subject brings particular difficulties with it. The lack of inter-related criticisms on psychology and the dangerous woman within the Scottish context leaves almost too much material open for discussion. Both feminist and Scottish aspects of the subject demand the redefinition of previously dominant critical assumptions. The first serious difficulty is definition: what constitutes traditional feminist criticism concerning the 'dangerous woman' in Scottish literature? To confront this issue, we are obliged to focus on criticism of Scottish women's fiction of the twentieth century which provides the subject for my thesis. Obviously, individual Scottish women writers of the twentieth century may be considered as separate from one another based on their differing concerns with women's issues and with regard to their emphasis on topics like birth, class, education and life. Their shared interest, however, is the obstacles Scottish women find in the shadow of contemporary patriarchal institutions. Writers often set out to write within a perceived tradition. They also write, very often, from within a shared context such as a common culture. Despite the fact that contemporary Scottish women writers' circumstances can be different, their recognition of a traditional heritage, whether they agree or disagree with that heritage (whether or not they agree with the terms of that heritage), can be

¹⁵ Stocker argues that the myth of Judith provides an important key to modern society's view of women and power. She suggests that while a powerful *femme fatale* is also a cult in the Western fascination with the image of Judith from the early Middle Ages to the present, the threatening image of a masculine woman equates power with masculinity. See, Stocker, Margarita. *Judith, Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp.1-2.

viewed as a form of cultural subjectivity. If subjectivity plays such a crucial role in forming a new era's (the mid to late twentieth century's)¹⁶ cultural perspective, then the psychological state of a subject beyond the formation of its sense of ego will be an indispensable arena we must investigate.

As noted previously, the 'dangerous woman' has been employed in twentieth-century Scottish fiction in order to defy the inequalities of women's social or cultural treatment. Many critics endorse this type of woman sexual warrior because whether or not such a woman can win a victory by circumventing social forces, critical comment on this figure at least illustrates the societal demand for the autonomy of female subjectivity. However, what concerns me is the problem of female subjectivity in the ongoing controversy about whether or not women can ever release themselves from their strategies of physical defilement, or from their own counter-voices concerning social restrictions. By physical defilement and counter-voices, I mean that a person's physical transgression in his/her aggressive sadist sexual behaviour or murder of what he/she detests aims to articulate the necessity of his/her sense of self against the socially established gendered identities.

I refer this to Julia Kristeva's view about the ambivalence of a subject's existence.

Regarding the border of the subject, Barbara Creed writes:

Kristeva explores the different ways in which abjection works within human societies, as a means of separating out the human from the non-human and the fully constituted subject from the partially formed subject. Ritual becomes a means by which societies both renew their initial contact with the abject element and then exclude that element. Through ritual, the demarcation lines between the human and non-human are drawn up anew and presumably made all the stronger for that

¹⁶ In terms of postmodern psychological interpretation of the narratives, the reading of the opposing or layered meanings of literary texts begins in the mid of the twentieth century, in which the representative critics of narrative discourses such as parody and satire are Hutcheon, Barthes, Bakhtin, and Kristeva.

process.¹⁷

If ritual strengthens the sense of the peripheries of the subject, then the necessity of ritual will never disappear. If a subject's sense of existence relies on the rejection of what a subject denies, then this subject will always live in the reminiscence of the threat of his/her abject, and thereby always desires a ritual to obliterate it, no matter this ritual takes places physically or psychologically. Since this problem regarding female subjectivity is related to the border of the subject (although in some of my chosen texts, I discuss the borderline of male subjectivity), I will use Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection to analyse the female psychology which is inherent to the figure of the dangerous woman, as well as her discussion of intertextuality to examine the novelists' linguistic connotations in their fictions and their attitudes towards their female protagonists. My central axis of interpretation underlines a reading that the lexical meanings of the literary texts are illusions of reality. Through the linguistic reading of the grammatical dimension of literary texts (such as ruptures, rhythms, rhymes, puns, and usages of implied meanings between the lines), readers may discover the 'reality' of fictional figures that a furious woman or a misogynist longs for the affirmation of self's existence but is simultaneously suffocated by the border which he/she establishes from his/her abjects.

Julia Kristeva's Concept of Abjection

I certainly do not wish to propose that there is some 'ideal' way of representing women in fiction, or that some 'ideal' female identity exists (against which we can measure) and find other existing images of women wanting. After all, women can never be 'fully represented', nor can they be defined. This conviction lies behind the

¹⁷ Creed, Barbara. 'Kristeva, Femininity, Abjection'. *The Monstrous-Feminine: film, feminism, psychoanalysis*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 8-15 (8).

urge to question and criticise the existing 'dangerous woman' trope, which can have the effect of preventing women from realising a full and necessary identity of their own. As Julia Kristeva has declared:

On a deeper level . . . a woman cannot "be"; it is something which does not even belong in the order of *being*. It follows that a feminist practice can only be negative, at odds with what already exists so that we may say "that's not it" and "that's still not it". In "woman" I see something that cannot be represented, something that is not said, something above nomenclatures and ideologies.¹⁸

Notwithstanding this inevitably 'negative' aspect of feminist criticism, it may be possible to reclaim something positive for women from the images we find in fiction. Although the idea of the 'dangerous woman' seems threatening because it has the potential to disrupt social order, the need for social change deserves our attention. I consider that women's awareness of the social gender inequality is significant, and their protestations are required. The oppressed self's struggle is necessary, so that the revolutionary thought may result from the discovery of the mental disease. This self's adjustment in gender relationship may lead to a healthier confrontation of social oppression and bring about revolutionary change, which involves a democratic but innovative reaction to patriarchal authority. I propose that the six authors' purpose, on the one hand, is to expose women's patriarchally long-oppressed and distorted minds, inherited from the Middle Ages (such as Judith's powerful domination in her gender relationship) and still relevant in the present; and on the other hand, to advocate the illusion of the self's constructed reality. Subjectivity might be mandatory in relation to the subjective treatment of one issue, but may not be requisite between two sexes. Biologically, the sexes may have their own unique life-experiences, but these

¹⁸ From 'Woman Can Never Be Defined', translated by Marilyn August from the French of 'La femme ce n'est jamais ça', an interview with 'psychoanalysis and politics' in *Tel Quel* (Autumn 1974), in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Brighton, 1981), pp. 137-141 (137).

experiences do not essentially determine gendered identities and stable social positions.

Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1982) gives us an insight into the problematic construction of subjectivity; that is to say, an insight into the problematic process by which a person comes to see himself / herself as a unique being who possesses his / her own internal borders between the self and the Other. Kristeva outlines a psychoanalytic theory of the subject wherein there exists a pre-symbolic phase characterised by strong feelings of revulsion and horror in relation to certain objects, peoples and situations. What is denied has a decidedly negative status and is therefore undesired by the subject. This rejection of the abject object, according to Kristeva, forms the ego, and is also the means by which a child separates from its mother in order to guard against the first inclinations towards incest. In order to introduce Kristeva's theory of abjection in terms of these cases, I will divide her concept of abjection into the following two topics for discussion: the border of the subject and mother-child relationship.

The Border of the Subject

The abject, according to Kristeva, is comprised of the objects that are rejected by a subject and that are defined by the subject's dislikes or feelings of horror. When she first introduces the concept, she uses a specific loathing towards curdled milk as illustration:

When the eyes see or lips touch that skin on the surface of milk—harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring—I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire.

Along with sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. “I” want none of that element, sign of their desire; “I” do not want to listen, “I” do not assimilate it, “I” expel it. But since the food is not an “other” for “me”, who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out. I abject *myself* within the same motion through which “I” claim to establish *myself*.¹⁹

This food loathing illustrates the violence by which one jettisons not only that which creates the self, but also that which threatens the self’s internal borders. In distinguishing the subject from the rejected object, Kristeva also uses the example of loathing a corpse as an extreme illustration of the antithesis in the construction of the boundaries between subjects. Here the subject jettisons an image of death, but is at the same time infected by that which symbolises life’s fragility:

If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, “I” is expelled. . . . Deprived of world, therefore, I *fall in a faint*. In that compelling, raw, insolent thing in the morgue’s full sunlight, in that thing that no longer matches and therefore no longer signifies anything, I behold the breaking down of a world that has erased its borders: fainting away.²⁰

The corpse here does not function as an object which can be violently isolated (like food), but as a reminder of the permanent destination of human beings; this scene highlights the border between life and death.

From the abjection of food to that of the corpse, Kristeva claims that what makes something abject (like the curdling milk) and not simply repressed (like the horror of the corpse) is that it does not entirely disappear from consciousness, but instead forms both an unconscious and conscious threat to one’s own sense of being. What we might ask ourselves is: has abjection become a powerful source of cultural

¹⁹ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 2-3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

values? How successfully can the abject hero become a discredited subject as an idealised image of the human condition? To explore these questions, we shall examine how the psychological complexities of abjection result during the growth of an infant.

Mother-Child Relationship (Abjection)

Kristeva describes the process by which an infant emerges from the undifferentiated union it has with its mother and its early surroundings. Abjection first rises when the infant is still in an imaginary union with its mother. The first thing to be rejected is the mother's body, the child's own origin. The child does this by expelling, both physically and mentally, that which is not part of its proper self. Kelly Oliver speaks of the reason for this abjection, commenting that 'The not-yet-subject with its not-yet, or no-longer, object maintains itself as the abject. Abjection is a way of denying the primal narcissistic identification with the mother, almost'.²¹ The child draws a line between itself and its mother, renouncing identification with its mother in order to establish the basis for his narcissistic subjectivity. This narcissism, however, is ambiguous since the child longs for union with the maternal body as a point of origin, but simultaneously desires the possession of his / her own unique self. Oliver also indicates the impossibility of having a conscious awareness of this separation:

The 'subject' discovers itself as the impossible separation/identity of the maternal body. It hates that body but only because it can't be free of it. That body, the body without border, the body out of which this abject subject came, is impossible.²²

The abject mother continues to haunt the child's consciousness, remaining on the periphery of the child's awareness. Since the child's narcissistic complex involves the

²¹ Oliver, Kelly. *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 60.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

repellant and seductive impulses to his/her maternal body, his/her border of the self is paradoxically threatened and sustained: threatened because the image of the abject mother is seductive enough to crumble the boundary of self, and sustained because the fear of his / her loss of autonomy keeps him / her vigilant against the mother.

Instead of a passing stage in the child's development, this image of the abject mother remains a companion throughout the whole of the child's life. Cultures, according to Kristeva, set up religious or artistic rituals to deal with this threat, since religion and art serve as the social forms of purification, often by 'conjuring up the abject things it [the subject or cultural subjectivity] seeks to dispel'.²³ It is these forms of ritual that I plan to explore in twentieth-century Scottish women's fiction. In the following chapters, I will develop Kristeva's concept of abjection into my own theoretical framework, expanding it into several sub-concepts according to the types of gender issues in my chosen literary texts. I will use these four sub-concepts (different gendered identities demonstrated in various cultural contexts: sexual victimisation, devastating civilisation, performative socialisation, and demonic vindication respectively in the four parts of the thesis) to investigate how fictionally 'dangerous women' or men who love traditional idealised femininity and dislike the type of 'dangerous woman'—those who have a psychological complex of abjection—associated with their social community. What I hope to establish is that the 'dangerous woman' might not be as strong as has been previously determined; when we read her courage to rebel against the dominant social authorities in narration, she may instead be revealed as weak with the psychological impact of her abjection.

²³ McAfee, Noëlle. *Julia Kristeva*. (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 49.

Kristeva's Concept of Intertextuality

In order to find the implications of meaning that exist between narrative lines, we may want to ask whether or not there is a metalanguage beyond the narrative language. If the answer is positive, how can this metalanguage be found? Kristeva argues that 'metalanguage (equivalent to the position of impresario) is the source of meaning and identity. The absence or failure of metalanguage can result in psychosis'.²⁴ Kristeva writes that metalanguage involves a 'cascade' of signifieds, heterogeneity and otherness.²⁵ The heterogeneity and otherness lies in the decoding of the signifieds; with the decoding of the signifieds, the speaker's identity and his connoted meaning can be discovered by the readers. The borderline between the symbolic denotation and the semantic connotation has been drawn up as a psychoanalytic perspective.

Kristeva describes the symbolic, and its implications for the subject's attitude towards its body, as 'a totally different universe of socially signifying performances where embarrassment, shame, guilt, desire, etc. come into play—the order of the phallus'.²⁶ As with the semiotic, what is excluded to form the clean and proper body constantly exerts pressure on the symbolic order, threatening disruption and reminding the subject of the impossibility of transcending the corporeal origins of subjectivity. As Elizabeth Grosz says:

Understanding abjection involves examining the ways in which the inside and outside of the body are constituted, the spaces between the self and the other, and the means by which the child's body comes to be a bounded, unified whole [. . . and] gains access to symbolisation.²⁷

²⁴ Editor's introduction. Kristeva, Julia. 'Nom de mort ou de vie' ('Name of Death or of Life') Ed. John Lechte. *Writing and Psychoanalysis: A Reader*. (New York: St Martin's, 1996), p. 104.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

²⁶ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 74.

²⁷ Grosz, Elizabeth. *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*. (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), p.

The abject marks the site of both the genesis and the obliteration of the subject, and at the same time shows the semiotic drive. The semiotic, according to Kristeva, is linked to pre-Oedipal primary processes, those basic impulses that are oral, dichotomous (life versus death, expulsion versus introjection), and heterogeneous. The flow of impulses is gathered up in the *chora* (a Greek word for enclosed space, womb), which Plato in the *Timaeus* defines as ‘an invisible and formless being which receives all things and in some mysterious way partakes of the intelligible, and is most incomprehensible’.²⁸ Kristeva redefines Plato’s concept that the *chora* is neither a sign nor a position, but is instead,

a wholly provisional articulation that is essentially mobile and constituted of movements and their ephemeral stases. . . . neither model nor copy, it is anterior to and underlies figuration and therefore also specularisation, and only admits analogy with vocal or kinetic rhythm.²⁹

For Kristeva, the semiotic continuum must be split if signification is to be produced. The splitting of the *chora* is known as the *thetic* phase³⁰ and it enables the subject to attribute differences and thus signification to what was the ceaseless heterogeneity of the *chora*. Once the subject has entered into the Symbolic Order (in Kristeva’s terminology, the *phenotext*), the *chora* will be more or less successfully repressed and will be perceived only as impulsive pressures on symbolic language: as contradictions, meaninglessness, disruptions, silences and absences in the symbolic language. These non-linguistic attributes, such as rhymes, rhythms, repetitions, and ruptures, constitute the heterogeneous dimension of language (Kristeva calls this *genotext*).

By theorising *chora*, the semiotic becomes a metalinguistic force. Kristeva

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²⁸ Roudiez, Leon S. ‘Introduction’, in Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 1-20 (6).

²⁹ Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 25-26.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50. Kristeva uses the term to describe the bridging space between the semiotic and the symbolic.

writes:

Semanalysis carries on the semiotic discovery . . . it places itself at the service of the social law which requires systematisation, communication, exchange. But if it is to do this, it must inevitably respect a further, more recent requirement—and one which neutralises the phantom of ‘pure science’: the subject of the semiotic metalanguage must, however briefly, call himself in question, must emerge from the protective shell of a transcendental ego within a logical system, and so restore his condition with that negativity—drive-governed, but also social, political and historical—which rends and renews the social code.³¹

If the metalanguage questions social law and seeks a transcendental ego with politically renewed social code, then the pleasure of using belongs to the authors, and the pleasure of reading belongs to the readers. Authentically, the fictional figures consciously utter their comforts and discomforts towards their society, but this utterance does not ensure their reality, though they recognise this illusionary reality as their internal truth. However, the readers ultimately know the truth through their reading of the semiotic dimension of their language (metalanguage). Readers can even decipher the codes of the authors’ unconscious ‘truth’ if their literary works do not carry satirical tone of the fictional figures. The reading of metalanguage in this way produces various interpretative actions. The revolution of narrative theory (as articulated by Kristeva, which uses semiotic undertone to decipher the symbolic meaning) has here been underlined. Although the reading of the semiotic as a new science may involve multiple networks of conflicting ideologies, it can still unsettle the frameworks of the symbolic order.

Interpretative Sub-Text

³¹ Kristeva, Julia. ‘The System and the Speaking Subject’. *The Tell-Tale Sign: A Survey of Semiotics*. Ed. Thomas A. Seboek. (Lisse, Netherlands: The Peter de Ridder Press, 1975), pp. 54-55.

The metalanguage resides in the semiotic dimension of language; that is, interpretation derives from the reading of the *style* of linguistic expression, rather than from the interpretation of the contents (the lexical meanings). Susan Sontag writes this about the contemporary tendency of interpretation:

Interpretation in our own time, however, is even more complex. For the contemporary zeal for the project of interpretation is often prompted not by piety toward the troublesome text (which may conceal an aggression), but by an open aggressiveness, an overt contempt for appearances. The old style of interpretation was insistent, but respectful; it erected another meaning on top of the literal one. The modern style of interpretation excavates, and as it excavates, destroys; it digs 'behind' the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one.³²

If we view the readings of the semiotic dimension of language as sub-text, then the overt meaning of the narrative, even if it is critical, is nothing more than an access to the *style* of the symbolic language, to what is abjected. In women's fictional narration, we locate a speaker's attitudes towards the feminine through the decoding of the semiotic, since both femininity and the semiotic are located in marginal places: the former in a patriarchal institution, and the latter, in a linguistic institution. What has been denoted in the text is not necessarily the speaker's thoughts and feelings.

Structuralist critics would like to point out that there is always a gap between language and the world, that our sense of reality is produced by the grid of meaning we impose on the continuity of lived experience; whereas poststructuralist critics see literary texts as sites of multiple meanings and intentions. Whether or not the 'writing subject' intends to situate cultural implications within the realm of the semiotic, the symbolic intention is only one impulse among many that determine meaning; the narrator's (character's) unconscious desire also 'speaks' through her words. Readers may ascribe their satirical tone in interpretation, either to the characters or to the

³² Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation*. (Vintage: Random House, 2001 [1961]), p. 6.

authors. This interpretative pleasure, from this perspective, seems exclusively to pertain to the readers.

As Kristeva argues, 'Writing is upheld not by the subject of understanding, but by a divided subject, even a pluralised subject, that occupies . . . permutable, multiple and even mobile places'.³³ If readers are able to decipher the pluralised texts which exceed stable systems of meaning, they must hope to decode the repressive ideology of the text and its mocking complicity with the dominant power. This postmodern condition, in my reading, has specifically permeated twentieth-century Scottish women's fiction. Writing about the 'dangerous woman' might either carry with it a self-conscious parody—a tone of defiance against the patriarchy, or else contain an unconsciously sarcastic tone towards the repressive society. Despite the fact that both writing subjects have different intentions, the writers still leave much room for their readers to illuminate the contra- (different but related to) but not necessarily the counter- (in the oppositional places) ideologies embedded in the semiotic dimension of language. This subjective inscription with unconscious parodic revelation of its contradiction governs the metafictional reflexivity.

The postmodern condition, as Linda Hutcheon suggests, is one particularly sympathetic to the marginal and peripheral, or to what she describes as the 'ex-centric':

The centre no longer completely holds. And from the decentered perspective, the 'marginal', and what I will be calling the 'ex-centric' (be it in class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity) take on new signification in the light of the implied recognition that our culture is not really the homogeneous monolith (that is middle class, male heterosexual, white, western) we might have assumed. The concept of alienated otherness (based on binary oppositions that conceal hierarchies) gives way, as I have argued, to that of differences, that is to the assertion,

³³ Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 111.

not of centralised sameness, but of decentralised community—another postmodern paradox.³⁴

The position of the ‘dangerous woman’ is ex-centric in the way that Hutcheon here describes and specifically in relation to the socially expected role of the domestic woman that is present in earlier twentieth-century Scottish women’s fiction.³⁵ Hutcheon’s argument would clearly suggest that postmodernism may provide a sympathetic environment in which to reassess certain aspects of Scottish fiction. As for the postmodern concept of the marginal or ex-centric, I will discuss it in the following chapters in relation to the cultural context that surrounds my chosen novels (postmodernism varies with individuality and region).

From the above discussion, we may say that a subject sets the border for its symbolic identity and rejects anything which might threaten its stability, particularly the maternal body or femininity. The first two sections of this thesis engage with the perspectives from women’s abjection of femininity, while the later two sections assume an investigation about the male abjection of maternal body. In the first section, which explores work by A. L. Kennedy and Emma Tennant, I will discuss the female psychological borderline that is settled for fear of abnormal sexual desires. Dangerous women, in the guise of sadomasochistic heroines, set their own borders in order to protest against sexual victimisation. In the second section, which explores Elspeth Barker and Jessie Kesson, I will examine how two heroines project their fury about the social maltreatment of women onto the wild nature and landscape of their childhood and womanhood. Abjection here is being oppressed, but is also being identified with the wild changes of inhuman nature and is being projected against the civilised exploitation of gender. In the third section, which explores Alice Thompson,

³⁴ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), p. 12.

³⁵ The expected role of the domestic woman is characterised in Nan Shepherd’s *Quary Wood* (1928), Willa Muir’s *Imagined Corners* (1931), and Nancy Morrison’s *The Gowk Storm* (1933).

I will propose that the dangerous woman has been revised and takes on a recessive, rather than an aggressive, method of gender association. The figure of the dangerous woman aims to expose the male abjection of maternity that is hidden behind the male obsession with the female body, and that consequently destabilises socialised gender relations. In the fourth section, which explores Muriel Spark, I will suggest that the 'monstrous role' is vindicated for its endeavor to uncover man's habitual but erroneous moral disdain of a woman's social position in a male-dominated bourgeois society. The monstrous character invents words to disrupt the border between illusion and reality, and destroys man's wrongly justified border of self. Male abjection of the female body initiates the mutual destruction of the two sexes and leads both to the criminal act of murder and the symbolic murder of the border of the self.

In the first chapter of each part, I would like to use the four extended thematic sub-concepts of abjection to examine the psychology of the female protagonists in the fiction. In the following chapter of each part, I will further demonstrate the authors' satirical tone of this abjection through the device of narrative language. I will apply Kristeva's theory of the semiotic dimension of language to the novels and will scrutinise each texts' trans-linguistic arena, deciphering the grammatical signifieds (*genotext*) through a reading of the signifying structures of fixed or closed texts (*phenotext*). I will classify each texts' presentation of *genotext* according to four different categories—Imitation, Quotation, Allusion, and Deviation—and as they relate to the sub-texts towards which they refer.

The subject, as constructed through (the symbolic) / in (the semiotic) language, through a desire for meaning, is also spoken by the abject through a contrast with the place of meaninglessness (the *chora* before the semiotic). Thus the subject is constantly beset by the abject, which is lured to the subject's pleasure of his autonomy away from what he wants to get rid of, but which simultaneously must be repelled for

fear of self-annihilation. The abject is then not something of which the subject can ever feel free—it is always beckoning the self to take up the abjection; however, when the act of abjection occurs, the meaning of the subject collapses. I divide this thesis into four sections in order to discuss the representation of abjection in the spatial and temporal forms of gendered subjectivity. In the first chapter of each section, I explore that gender abjection is a *way* of cultural demonstration. In the second chapter of each section, I further provide evidence for gender abjection in terms of intertextuality, by examining how literary plots impact satirical tone, especially when that tone is directed towards other texts produced in different cultural contexts.

The Female Gothic in the Twentieth Century

Underlying many attempts to theorise a female Gothic is the idea that the form effectively represents an attempt by a female protagonist to escape from an oppressive internal life into a world of mental freedom. From eighteenth-century conceptions of the Gothic female as a prisoner suffering the injustices of external social discipline, to twentieth-century Gothic representations of feminine rage released through physical transgression, the characteristics of this genre seem to evidence a shift from external confinement to internal imprisonment. Although the problems of internal imprisonment have often been the cause of external violence or the origin of personal madness, the Scottish female Gothic seems, in the twentieth-century at least, to more typically depict traditional Gothic elements of social restriction.

Arising from a genuine concern for nationalism (for political autonomy, international status, and social justice in relation to a past imperial England and for those states that are now a part of the United Kingdom), the psychological complexity of a Scottish woman's double marginalisation is rooted in the disadvantages imposed

by particular social, educational, and economic conditions in the first half of the twentieth century. The centrality of gender-related oppressions has gradually resulted in the exploration of external marginalisation and internal isolation in women's writing. Internal isolation is explored with regard to female living conditions in relatively rural Scottish communities during the post-world war periods, and in post-industrialised urban society at the last decade of twentieth century. Scottish women writers of the twentieth century begin to notice the deprivation of women's rights in social and educational conditions. Muriel Spark, for instance, shows a female teacher's freedom of thought and the impact this has on her teaching career in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961); Nan Shepherd in *The Weatherhouse* (1930) and Lewis Grassie Gibbon (although a male writer) in *Sunset Song* (1932) both consider the familial and social difficulties that Scottish north-eastern women experience when it comes to educational and societal integration; more recently, A. L. Kennedy in *So I am Glad* (1996) and Janice Galloway in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1990) both contemplate the awareness that urban women possess when it comes to acknowledging the personal traumas that might expose their own disconnection from daily human interactions.

The discrepancy between individual expectation in society and the low pattern of growth in society has always been of Scottish literary and historical concern. In fact, Scottish literary traditions of the split self originate from the work of Robert Louis Stevenson in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) which explores the darker side of the human psyche, and from the work of James Hogg in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) which elaborates how the external world is a projection of an internal mental state. Regarding the twentieth-century concern with psychological doubling and the drive towards goodness and evil, Fred Botting proposes that female Gothic themes in contemporary

literature are often associated with 'the sense of despair culminat[ing]' in a disintegrated family or maternally oppressive community 'in a moment of nauseous self-recognition'.³⁶ According to my examination of the chosen texts, the tension between the protagonist's expectation and despair, on the way to self-recognition, reveals itself in the form of a distorted psychological borderline between reality (the empirical world in which she lives) and fantasy (the displaced world in which she expects to live). The Scottish writers in the twentieth-century, particularly women writers, demonstrate the psychological doubling of empirical worlds by drawing not only a literary connection between reality and illusion, but also a literary (clinical) diagnosis for traumatic human relationships in the twentieth-century female Gothic.

Many critics have argued that the ways in which women are represented in literature bear a complex relationship to society and ideology. Feminist critics in particular, when challenging assumptions about the function of criticism and critical disinterest in articulating the patriarchal authority, emphasise the insights into both literature and society that studying the representation of women can provide. It is particularly important to study the representation of women in fiction, because the writers' criticisms about their own societies have often been more embedded in that narrative rendering than in any other literary genre. The novel has arguably played a major role in forming society's vision of itself, and this has had special significance for women. The aims of feminist criticism may then be compared with those of other social and cultural groups. However, Scottish literature both needs and deserves more serious attention, not only for its interest in socially marginalised groups, but also because the critical study of Scottish literature can contribute to a more general understanding of Scottish culture and identity.

I choose the following literary texts because they show different representations

³⁶ Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 161.

of the 'dangerous woman' reacting to external violations of the female body, and because they evidence a real authorial intention to elaborate upon this reaction—generally by comparing or contrasting the protagonist's psychological double with literary traditions of the split self that appear in older literary texts. I plan to use Kristeva's view about maternal abjection to explore the psychological borderline that is established by the Gothic female who refuses to reveal the maternal side of her personality; I also plan to look at the reasoning and consequences that characterise masculine maternal abjection in association with maternal love. Regarding the manner in which authors deal with past literary texts or literary (oral) traditions, I will also consult Kristeva's view about semiotic language embedded in the lexical meaning of the text. I will do this through an intertextual comparison with other (older) literary texts, so as to examine the alternative (satirical not supportive) undertones of complex psychological abjection in gender-driven relationship.

In the first section, 'Gendering Victimisation', which examines Kennedy's *So I am Glad*, and Tennant's *The Bad Sister* and *Two Women of London*, I look at the way in which women are socially marginalised as the Other and are used by society to uphold various standards of womanhood. This abjection of the maternity as the Other is effected in the female protagonists' minds. As regards the psychological interpretation of the grotesque, I propose that Kennedy and Tennant show a thematic concern, for the fragile conscience as it stems from the Scottish literary tradition of the internal duality (evil and good); using the device of textual *imitation* (imitating character encounters in preceding texts), the two authors point out the inadequacy of patriarchal systems.

In the second section, 'Gendering Civilisation', which examines Barker's *O Caledonia* and Kesson's *The White Bird Passes*, I explore the symbolic significance of the Northeast of Scotland referring to the two periods after two world wars, which

is embodied as being natural wilderness in comparison to the Lowlands. The girlhood pleasure that derives from a relationship with nature and that is embodied in young, sentimental, provocative yet resilient heroines, is undermined by the evolution of society from the primitive towards the civilised. Human sentiment, as shown by Barker's Janet and Kesson's Jane, protests against the civil patrimonial domination of a woman's social position, and urges women to escape from the internal oppression of maternal pleasure and to indulge in an intuitive and spontaneous contact with wild nature. Barker and Kesson show the Scottish female social position as it has been marginalised during the re-building of society throughout two post-world war periods. In reference to the folktale presented in the Scottish traditional ballads, I propose an intertextual method of *quotation* to show the two protagonists' unarticulated fury about gender oppression within folktales.

In the third section, 'Gendering Socialisation', which examines Thompson's fiction, I explore the post-structuralist viewpoint that holds the displacement of gender performance as a 'natural' biological distinction between women and men. The two protagonists in *Justine* and *Pandora's Box* disrupt an essentialist equation between biological sex and social gender while simultaneously denying themselves the Sadeian claim that a supposedly weak femininity may take sexual dominance over a supposedly strong masculine character. I contend that Thompson releases tension between the normative construction of gender and its subversive deconstruction. Rather than preoccupying themselves with the female place in sado-masochism, Thompson's two female protagonists politically praise the 'ex-centric' position of women as the Other in relation to men which endangers male subjects. Within the critique of social gender performance, they search, provoking a reflexive manner of sociality, for the difference which guarantees them an unfixed gender identity. Using critical allusions to the Sadeian woman and to the mythical figure of Pandora in Greek

mythology, Thompson attempts to find a path towards a multiplistic vision rather than a reversal towards sado-masochism, with the view of overthrowing a biological/social equation in Sadeian gender relationships. As the concept of Sadeian gender relationship is being examined and suppressed, I argue that there is an *allusive* way of intertextuality to supplement the analysis of textual satires.

In the fourth section, 'Gendering Vindication', which examines Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, I analyse the male fear for sexuality or for emotional intimation with women as a behavioral regulation. In *The Ballad*, a Satanic character with two bumps on his head seduces humans towards crime by offering them—the citizens of an industrialised community—'advice'. The Satanic character's invented language politically satirises the free will of men and skillfully undermines the collective sanctioning of deviant behaviour. The exposure of the citizens' internal violence, materialistic greed, and gender suppression reveals the hypocritical mask worn by mankind. This Satanic character not only undermines a socially self-fulfilling moral entity that validates itself by shaping bodies, desires and identities, but also enhances the role of the devil in bringing about the human recognition of evil. This devilish character, as a fantastic character himself, obscures the boundaries between illusion and reality, and tempts people to carry out their motives; the illusion is just the reality of a psychological state. After reading Spark's comment on the gothic revenge shown in *Frankenstein*, I propose a method of intertextual *deviation* (in terms of *The Ballad*'s plot's reversal) that is similar to that of *Frankenstein* with its related motif of immoral excess. I claim that the evil, in both cases, mirrors internal immorality.

There is a particularly pressing need for critical scrutiny of female representation in Scottish fiction because Scottish women have often been fictionally represented according to enduring and restrictive myths; many of these myths are first established

in literature, and then pervade popular culture. Writing from the diverse and reflexive ground of Scottish experience, these six authors launch a challenge to lexical manifestations of critical narratives. The central argument of this thesis is that the six authors purposefully complicate their societies' prescribed rules of gender identity and thereby undermine a socially self-fulfilling moral subjectivity that validates itself by shaping human beings' desires and identities.

Part One

Gendering Victimisation: The Paradox of Castration

Key female characters in both Emma Tennant's *The Bad Sister* (1978), *Two Women of London* (1989) and A. L. Kennedy's *So I am Glad* (1996) often undergo recurring forms of violence, such as marital exploitation, rape, and sexual abuse. These women are unable to defend themselves from the forces of male violators who brutally assume control over their bodies in order to assert their own dominance. Laura E. Tanner suggests that an assault on a female body is a social act implying the annihilation of female subjectivity. As 'the rape victim's body becomes a text on which *his* will is inscribed', Tanner states, 'the image of bodily penetration is thus bound up with an assault on subjectivity in which the victim is annihilated both inside and outside'.¹ The damage to the physical body implicitly induces a denial of the autonomy of the psychic subject by women themselves. Within such an entangled scenario of body and subjectivity, the woman's body, as an agent of subjectivity, has no defense against her violator; the rapist's physical appropriation of the female body relegates female subjectivity into the social position of Otherness.

In both Tennant's and Kennedy's fictions, violence is not simply a feminist issue that dwells on bodily victimisation. Using an elaborate inscription of violence, Tennant and Kennedy commonly posit this bodily victimisation as a destructive power which paradoxically promises creativity and rebirth in both personal and social arenas. The violation enacted on the female body, though it endangers the female subject physically, raises a desire in the female to disassociate herself with 'the

¹ Tanner, Laura E. *Intimate Violence: Reading Rape and Torture in Twentieth-Century Fiction*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 115.

feminine' and even to obliterate the feminine altogether. In these fictional worlds, the violence performed on the female body triggers a backlash protest, and acts as a catalyst for each character's perception of her own cognitive limitations, and for her reintegration into existing social formations.

Tennant's and Kennedy's female protagonists often go through a traumatic coming-to-awareness process that revises their sense of identity, particularly as women, and that changes how they relate to their accustomed worlds. This process is initiated by supernatural encounters which symbolise the characters' vulnerable inner lives. These encounters often take place in mysterious houses that are beset by symbolic weather: dark fog, blotted sky, incessant rain, and impending storms. Such illustrations serve to emphasise each character's psychic isolation. In coming to awareness, the characters are often vexed by the abyss of their own inner darkness wherein they must confront the fearful mental state. I contend that these fearful qualities (expressed through rage, fierceness, and eroticism) can be explained by Kristeva's view of the feminine/maternal (symbolic vulnerability/semiotic invincibility).² Depending on their internal fortitude, characters either try to avoid and suppress these encounters or to accept and assimilate them into their sense of self. Because I see an evolution in the two authors' portrayals of gender conflicts, I intend to explore the limits of their characters' psychic worlds in relation to their emotional intensity, and to inquire into the political resolution of this intensity when it is

² According to Kristeva's psychoanalysis, the rejection of the maternal body results from a deep anxiety over the possibility of losing one's subjectivity. Our sense of subjectivity is founded upon the exclusion of what is symbolically repressed but is still part of us. However, the repulsion of what we cannot separate ourselves from is futile. To eradicate the symbolic threats, we must paradoxically return to what is repressed, i.e., to fall back into the maternal *chora*. The *chora*, for Kristeva, is the space in which the meaning is produced and which breeds the semiotic: the echolalis, glossolalias, rhythms, and intonations of an infant who does not yet know how to use language to refer to objects. The semiotic, in other words, is a space in which symbolic communication takes place and may make itself felt in symbolic communication. The semiotic is invincible because it does not take any form of symbolic communication but is relatively evident in every symbolic intention of communication. See Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 43-51.

landscaped onto purposefully Gothic texts.

Both Tennant and Kennedy establish their Gothic texts by having their protagonists first experience the 'dark Unknown' in mysterious old houses, which they describe as 'dark red' like 'a grim Victorian brothel' (Emma Tennant's *The Bad Sister*, 21), as a 'Pompeiiian mural' (Emma Tennant's *Two Women of London*, 219) and as a 'grainy room, dim' of a 'square, grey house' (A. L. Kennedy's *So I am Glad*, 11, 19). The connection between the feminine life force and these houses is readily apparent. In discussing the house as a dream image of the human body, Sigmund Freud distinguishes houses with smooth facades as male and those with balconies and projections as female.³ Using this interpretation, we may say that the front hall and the back garden, which we first see in *Two Women of London*, are distinctively female: a hall 'mirrored with old glass so that it was impossible to tell where it ended and the rest of the flat began' (217) and a garden 'grown humpy . . . as if a mass of botched graves had been attempted there' (224). The hall and the garden once belonged to a Sir James Lister, as did a 'Christmas decoration' room wherein Miss Jekyll (one of Tennant's female protagonists) feels her past as 'a prisoner' and where she learns about her earlier 'inevitable breakdown' for the sake of 'impossible dreams of happiness' (255-6). The deplorable past imprisonment of the female body as characterised by a house, is a device used by Tennant and Kennedy in order to encourage a symbolic reading of the house as representing the archaic, primal origins of life.

Gothic technique in Kennedy's novel, however, is quite different from anti-social behaviour as represented in Tennant's work; Kennedy's female protagonist has a profound internal passion concerning the insensibility of violence. Her character

³ Freud, Sigmund. *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. General eds. Angela Richards and Albert Dickson. Vol. 1 (London: Pelican Books Ltd, 1973), p. 186.

must 'communicate' her own indifference towards social violence (indifference that reflects her own fear of terror) using a ghost figure (invisible, so without danger; communicable, so with intimate connection). Through this kind of communication, her character may release past oppressions (formerly communicated through rage) into very present forms of non-sentimentality.

Although these two representations of Gothic terror are different, they also possess certain similarities. By characterising their female protagonists as being somehow *split* from their confined bodies, Tennant and Kennedy imagine for their heroines a momentary escape from the prison of physical identity. They display the subtle ways in which women repudiate their bodies in order to produce the desired autonomy of their existence. Conversely, they illustrate how the repulsion of the female body endangers a woman's existence. This echoes Michelle Massé's claim that the Gothic genre exposes a widespread 'cultural amnesia' obscuring the traumatic destruction of women's independent subjectivity.⁴ Gothic horror, she argues, makes visible the terror that subjugates women into positions of subservience and powerlessness. I propose that gothic implementations of horror plausibly express the traumatic destruction of female autonomy, and that they do so by violently repressing female desires during the construction of womanhood. Unlike Massé, however, I see the Gothic horror as a double-edged sword of repression *and* of liberation. Through this paradox, Tennant and Kennedy, to some extent, invite their readers to take pleasure in patriarchal violence; their exploitation of the power of horror is shown as being repressive. Such scenes of horror, however, afford their readers a trope by which to imagine the transgression of the repressive construct of identity. In this sense, the two writers articulate a psychological rebirth in patriarchal repression.

⁴ Massé, Michelle A. *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 992), p. 43.

Kristeva's theory of the abject provides a corresponding insight into the crisis of subjectivity and into the ambivalence of the border of the self. Although Kristeva emphasises abjection as a reiteration of separation from the maternal, her discussion of self-awareness gained in the process of struggling against and being pulled into the abject, sheds light on responses made by Tennant's and Kennedy's Gothic characters. By dramatising the primal experience through sexual violation, madness, and ghosts, Tennant and Kennedy are courting disorder. They are pressing the limits of rationality and making their characters risk temporary humiliation in order to gain greater awareness, particularly of the feminine. These authors are speaking about topics considered inappropriate by contemporary society: the fearful, the incestuous, the energetic, the erotic and the anti-social. These emotions and conditions imply a regression to the maternal and threaten to overwhelm their characters. The dissolution of the repulsion of the female body inevitably relies on a return to the maternal; this return involves incoherent passions: pain and pleasure. The spectacle of pleasure, in other words, derives from the spectacle of vulnerability. The power of regression to the maternal, paradoxically generated by the abjection of the maternal, connotes a profound recognition that subjects are positional in relation to their abjects, are partly contingent, and are implicated with one another.

After discussing the symbolic repression of the maternal body in Chapter One in relation to Tennant's *The Bad Sister*, *Two Women of London* and Kennedy's *So I am Glad*, I will analyse through the semiotic implications of fictional language, how Tennant and Kennedy in the same works show a fighting but repressive female subject. I will use Kristeva's view of intertextuality as a linguistic approach in order to see how Tennant and Kennedy satirically conceal a mentally-ill self in the defiance of patriarchal authority. The trace of layered motifs, as implicated in Tennant's and Kennedy's fictions, foregrounds my analysis of the female Gothic which reads the

Gothic as a confrontation with the maternal. The Gothic self is torn between the real and the unreal and signals the problems of subjectivity that the female character must face. In Chapter One, I will further discuss how the abject of the female body forms the female characters' internal Other (the image of woman as seen through the desire of man) as a radical estrangement of themselves, and how this self-isolating pain is dissolved through incoherent pathos⁵ (fear and strength); I will also argue that this is a form of the psychological grotesque. The inscription of the maternal abyss becomes each character's necessary limitation but also her strength. In Chapter Two, I will then investigate the two authors' fictional fabrication of the internal Other, using their satirical representations of the divided self as portrayed through various cultural particularities. I plan to explore their textual self-reflexivity, which ironically provokes a conditioned response to social particularities of authority. By examining this conditioned response, the two authors make us aware of how it was induced in their female characters. I believe that Tennant's and Kennedy's use of postmodern irony politicises subjective desire through a textual play with both the revealed (the lexical symbolic) and the hidden (the grammatical semiotic), and the offered and the deferred.

⁵ I have chosen to use this term to refer to 'fear and strength' in order to compare the power of rebirth to an audience's emotional expression of sadness and pity (as catharsis—emotional displacement) in response to a play. Aristotle mentions this kind of catharsis quite specifically in his definition of tragedy, *Poetics*, Chapter VI. According to Aristotle, this release of emotion enables the spectator to experience a therapeutic effect, or a sense of release from tension—calm. See, Adams, Hazard, ed. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Revised ed. (Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1992 [1971]), pp. 53-54.

Chapter One

The Feminine as the Grotesque

I can't recall a single moment of damage that could
have turned me out to be who I am today. I can dig
down as deep as there is to dig inside me and there
truly is nothing there, not a squeak. For no good reason,
no reason at all, I am empty. I don't have any moles.

-- *So I am Glad*, 6-7

I have chosen A. L. Kennedy's *So I am Glad* (1995) and Emma Tennant's *Bad Sister* (1978) / *Two Women of London* (1989) to exemplify how twentieth-century female Gothic writers are no longer concerned with the physical anger unleashed by oppressed women against men; they are instead concerned with how the contemporary woman internalises her anger and desires revenge even to the point of self-sacrifice. This is a unique feature in Kennedy's writing and is also a remarkable characteristic in Tennant's observation of the twentieth-century middle-class woman in London. Modern materialistic life can no longer satiate a woman's fundamental desire to have a peaceful existence without fear of bodily violation. The more materials a society possesses, the more desires it will generate.

Pleased to 'produce . . . subversive text[s] out of the scraps',¹ Emma Tennant and A. L. Kennedy have both written novels which draw on a variety of texts and ideas, including such hegemonic discourses as philosophy, history and myth. Contemporary literary critics have deconstructed these discourses through an examination of the two writers' uses of language. Feminist critics have uncovered the gendered nature of such language, thereby demonstrating Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's assertion that 'individual identity, including sexual identity, is social and relational

¹ Indicated by Tennant in an interview. See Kenyon, Olga. *Women Writers Talk: Interviews with 10 Women Writers*. (Oxford: Lennard Publishing, 1989), pp. 173-187 (176).

rather than original or private'.² Fictional writers have likewise turned their attention to exploring the 'linguistic markings of the character',³ especially in the 'quasi-linguistic inscription of surfaces'.⁴ The semantic significance of this change is figuratively manifested in the material that contributes to characterisation in their fiction. Some of Tennant's and Kennedy's characters commonly share what I read as sexually exploited and psychologically distorted identities, and are women who denote a feminist perspective on the materiality of language for the effect of unmaking and amplifying our linguistic understanding of the term 'Gothic'.

Although numerous essays have indicated the deconstructive tendency of the fiction of Tennant and Kennedy, none has explored this tendency through the domain of psychoanalysis, especially through the psychological interpretation of maternal abjection. In the first section (1.1), I plan to begin with Kristeva's concept of abjection, and contend that the nature of abjection shares an affinity with those psychological qualities of the grotesque which were used in the eighteenth century. I do this knowing that physical deformity in Gothic narratives can no longer fulfill modern female writers' desires to transgress the limits which the patriarchal society imposes on the female body, and that it can no longer satisfy their efforts to inscribe the dramatic transformation punctuated by women's suffering in their socially confined bodies. The psychological representation of the grotesque therefore becomes a crucial method by which contemporary writers offer an insight into the complex nature of the female longing for bodily transgression and into the consequent dramatic

² Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*. (New York and London: Methuen, 1986 [1976]), p. 142.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-165. While discussing the repetitiveness and fixity inherent in the Gothic presentation of character, Sedgwick suggests that incomplete linguistic markings of 'character' maintain a 'draining but irreducible tension with a fiction of physical, personal presence'.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-158. Sedgwick regards 'the marking of flesh' and 'the marking with blood of veils' and other surfaces as having similarities to written language; he contends that the 'character' in the Gothic narratives is anchored in the image of the 'contagious, quasi-linguistic inscription of surfaces'. It is these markings that mould the sexual identity.

transformations of this longing. In the second section (1.2), I would like to further explain how the psychological qualities of the grotesque are concerned with Kristeva's view of maternal abjection, and why the female subjectivity is sustained but endangered by this abjection, simultaneously and paradoxically. In the third section (1.3), I will attempt to show how female characters' aversion to the masculine mode of the feminine (the corporeal conformity of women to men), in Tennant's *The Bad Sister* (1978), *Two Women of London* (1989) and Kennedy's *So I am Glad* (1995), becomes their abjection of the maternal and therefore forms an internal Other from which they are alienated. The repulsion of this internal Other (as projected by supernatural mediators) sustains each character's borderline of self, but haunts them so that they must unravel what has been constructed. The central argument of this chapter foregrounds a belief that a subject's attempt to deny the maternal part of itself results in nothing but an oscillation between contradictory emotions: passion and threat—the psychological qualities of the grotesque.

1.1 *Shift of the Grotesque*

According to Kristeva, the abject represents 'our earliest attempts to release the hold of the *maternal* entity even before existing outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language'.⁵ Kristeva indicates that 'a phantasmatic mother' constitutes in the history of each person, 'the abyss that must be established as an autonomous (and not encroaching) *place*, and *distinct* object, meaning a *signifiable* one', so that the person might 'learn to speak'.⁶ In spite of this 'place', one does not 'cease separating' from the abject; one retains the power to recreate an attempt to break away

⁵ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

from the maternal entity which is also punctuated by the pull back from the maternal.⁷ Re-experiencing the act of separation from the maternal entity eradicates the limits of one's psychic world and the limits of self-knowledge:

The abject shatters the wall of repression and its judgments. It takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away Abjection is a resurrection that has gone through death (of the ego). It is an alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, of new significance.⁸

Such a definition of the abject as a rebirth into new understanding through the lure of the maternal abyss helps explain why Emma Tennant's and A. L. Kennedy's characters are terrified of, but attracted to, extra-rational experiences. The incoherent pathos embedded in their rendering of gender trauma precisely corresponds to the incoherent nature of the grotesque as inherited from the eighteenth century: in both its older and its newer forms, the power of grotesque liberation stems from vulnerability, just as pleasure comes from forbearance of pain.

In an influential discussion on female Gothic, Ellen Moers defines the Gothic as including any work that 'gives *visual* form of the fear of the self'.⁹ The key notion behind this definition holds that that which had been buried in the darkness—a realm, unknown to ourselves, is now unveiled and becomes even more terrifying because fear is visualised. According to Moers, visualised fear embraces all images of self-hatred in the form of freaks, and that such images lead to a grotesque tradition in the female Gothic mode. The heroine, in this tradition, is imprisoned in a female body

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 15.

⁹ Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), p. 107. Moers takes *Wuthering Heights* by Charlotte Brontë of the eighteenth century as an example to illustrate a fact that the Gothic female's savagery of girlhood, which causes her growth's despair and even the impetus to self-destruction in her adulthood, has still been the persistent concern in the writing of women in the twentieth century. She considers female experience in 'the compulsion to visualise the self' to be the most distinguished feature of the female Gothic; visualising the fear of the self can not only characterise female's sentimental perceptions of her external world, but also expose her particular psychological reactions to her subjugated living conditions.

which itself can embody the maternal. This imprisonment evokes the heroine's aversion to her own body and provokes the loss of her sense of self. She thus begins her search for distorted bodies in order to put off her own femaleness. Mary Russo, however, in *The Female Grotesque*, notes that the construction of the feminine is often associated with the 'positioning of the grotesque'¹⁰ [body]—as superficial and [placed at] . . . the margins'.¹¹ Both critics agree that the social construction of the feminine is based on the corporeal and the unnatural in relation to societal norms.

According to Russo, the shift of the grotesque from visual abnormal figures to obscure and mysterious mental activities marks a modern interpretation of the grotesque 'as an interior event and as a potentially adventurous one'.¹² Russo's locus for the grotesque favours the demonic grotesque defined by Wolfgang Kayser.¹³ Kayser defines the grotesque as the 'estranged world',¹⁴ and considers a work grotesque when it contains motifs that are characteristic of the demonic (such as owls or snakes). Additionally, Kayser's definition of the grotesque implies the intriguing psychic world of the demon, but does not insinuate its visual function in the satiric

¹⁰ In Mikhail Bakhtin's work, *Rabelais and His World*, the grotesque is referred to as the bodies of the folk. At certain points in the calendar, ordinary people were allowed to transgress temporarily the social order, replacing the regulating 'bodies' of church and state with rituals that foregrounded the irregular, crude and collective material body. In Bakhtin's argument, therefore, the grotesque becomes associated with all that is exiled to the margins of propriety. In this sense, Russo regards the female body which exudes both blood and babies as frequently identified as the ultimate example of the grotesque, as in Bakhtin's image of the 'senile, pregnant hag'. Russo shows that an identification with the grotesque (pregnant) body mirrors the position of women in male-dominated culture. See Russo, Mary. *The Female Grotesque*. (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1-2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹³ Wolfgang Kayser's definition is one of the grotesque's two forms that prevailed in the eighteenth century. In the eighteenth century, two types of grotesque prevail: the comic grotesque, whose origins and significance are detailed by critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), in the tradition of the festival of the carnival; and the demonic grotesque, whose most thorough modern critical treatment is due to Wolfgang Kayser (1906-1960). In an earlier era, the grotesque had been synonymous with the comic grotesque in the service of satire and comedy. The comic type of the grotesque has never been reconciled with the demonic grotesque. See Madden, Heidi. *The Grotesque as Narrative Method: a study of Jean Paul's Dr. Katzenbergers Badereise and Tobias Smollett's Humphry Clinker*. Thesis (Ph.D.), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1991. p. iii.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12. Wolfgang Kayser's *das Groteske: Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung* (1957) (*The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, trans. 1963) identified the literary grotesque almost with the demonic grotesque, leading the interpretation of literary grotesque into the psychic realm of the demon.

form. Similarly, Russo suggests that when the grotesque is 'strongly related to the psychic register and to the bodily as a cultural projection of an inner state', the uncanny is immediately invited to exceed the norms.¹⁵ By drawing our attention to the grotesque's function as 'a deviation from the norm',¹⁶ Russo indicates that 'the archaic, maternal version of the female grotesque' is 'the privileged site of transgression for Kristeva'.¹⁷ The female grotesque, from Russo's perspective, is more closely related to Kristeva's psychoanalysis of abjection than to the conventional notion of the physical grotesque.¹⁸

Russo suggests that Kristeva's psychoanalysis of abjection 'problematises the subject' and 'projects herself towards the grotesque'.¹⁹ This grotesque addresses a psychological state wherein the subject's power of horror arises from his/her being; his/her existence is then sustained by this power, while this power simultaneously jeopardises the subject's autonomy. The paradox embedded in this understanding of the grotesque derives from one's psychological rejection of what seems to be part of oneself. This paradox of the psychological interpretation of the grotesque shares an affinity with Kristeva's explanation of abjection. According to Kristeva, the abject

¹⁵ Russo, Mary. *The Female Grotesque*. (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 7 & 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12. Russo posits the female grotesque within psychoanalysis as a challenge to what Teresa de Lauretis calls the 'technologies of gender', a politics of normalisation and homogeneity called gender difference.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63. Russo argues that Bakhtin makes an important contribution to putting forward the notion of the grotesque body, which is 'the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change', and to constituting a challenge to the official, normalised, Classical body. However, arguing that this image 'is loaded with all of the connotations of fear and loathing around the biological processes of reproduction and of aging', Russo condemns Bakhtin as 'fail[ing] to acknowledge or incorporate the social relations of gender in his semiotic model of the body politics'.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64. Russo notes that Kristeva's analysis of Paul C  line's literary work, which 'takes on his rhetoric of abjection and interestingly comes to rest in the category of the maternal', reveals the grotesque. This grotesque, embodied in the powers of horror of being, of the subject, is what Kristeva identifies as the 'undoer of narcissism and of all imaginary identity as well'. Russo is quoting from Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 208. This grotesque is grounded on the ambivalence of the border of the self, as understood by the subject. As Kristeva focuses on C  line, the fascination with the maternal body in childbirth and the fear of and repulsion from it throughout the chosen texts of C  line show the ambivalence of the border of the self: the undifferentiated union with the maternal is to crumble the border of the self but the fear of such a collapse keeps the subject vigilant.

ensures the ability to create the border of one's self but at the same time threatens this border.²⁰ What is rejected is radically excluded but is never banished altogether. It hovers at the periphery of one's existence, constantly challenging one's own borders of selfhood. The abject beckons to, but at the same time, destroys the subject.

1.2 *Maternal Abjection and Female Subjectivity*

Kristeva defines the first instance of 'maternal abjection' as the abject mother. Abjection begins when the infant is still in an imaginary union with its mother, before it has recognised its image in a mirror, and well before it begins to learn language or to enter the symbolic realm. The infant is not yet a subject, and is not yet on the borderline of subjectivity. Abjection will help it to reach this goal. The first *thing* to be rejected is the mother's body or the child's own origin. Abjection is 'a way of denying the primal narcissistic identification with the mother'.²¹ In order to become an autonomous subject, the child must renounce its identification with its mother. It is difficult, however, for a child to draw a distinction between himself/herself and his/her mother:

The 'subject' discovers itself as the impossible separation/identity of the maternal body. It hates that body but only because it can't be free of it. That body, the body without border, the body out of which the abject subject came, is impossible.²²

The child's 'maternal abjection' is a constant companion to its growing consciousness. The maternal abjection is a longing to fall back into the maternal body as well as a deep anxiety over the possibility of losing its subjectivity. What the child expels as the abject is never entirely gone. The abject haunts the subject's consciousness, remaining

²⁰ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 2.

²¹ Oliver, Kelly. *Reading Kristeva*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p.60.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

on the periphery of its awareness. The subject finds the abject both seductive and repellant so that its border of self paradoxically maintains its sense of security but endangers its autonomy.

In Russo's view, Kristeva's psychoanalysis of abjection denotes 'the accumulated horror and contempt of the descriptions of the maternal body', which generate 'a subliminal defense of the maternal' or 'an idealised category far from the realities of motherhood as a construction or as a lived experience'.²³ Russo implies here that the paradox of abjection, the confusion that lies between the alluring and yet horrible borders of self, comes as the intimation of an idea too large for any grotesque form of physical transgression. In other words, when we call such a mental condition 'grotesque', we betray our own fallen or degraded physical condition, and disregard the limitations of our own vision in lived experience. As Russo acknowledges, though the models of the grotesque change,

there is a way in which radical negation, silence, withdrawal, and invisibility, and the bold affirmations of feminine performance, imposture and masquerade (purity and danger) have suggested cultural politics for women.²⁴

Russo's psychologically regressive but politically radical method connotes the shortening of the will and of power, but predicts the consequent dissolution of the border of subjectivity of which the grotesque consists.

In summary, therefore, the abjection of the feminine (i.e. the repulsion of the submissive female body) becomes 'the grotesque', or estrangement from oneself. The feminine, when reduced to the norm of corporeal representation as displayed through conformity to masculine desire, is recognised as the rejected Other within oneself. I propose that Tennant's *The Bad Sister* (1978), *Two Women of London* (1989) and Kennedy's *So I am Glad* (1995), all inscribe their female protagonists with a hatred

²³ Russo, Mary. *The Female Grotesque*. (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 65.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

towards the feminine, thereby significantly reforming the tradition of the grotesque. Rather than translating 'the grotesque' into a freakish physical transgression or into a physical subversion within a male-defined ethical system, the three novels express the grotesque as a result of a psychological aversion to gender boundaries as they are regulated by the patriarchal system. They elaborate the psychological transformations of various characters as effected through the pleasure of emancipation.

1.3 *Abjection of the Other*

One feminist construction that is employed by both Tennant and Kennedy (and that necessarily concerns the sexual exploitation of women by men) is the figure of the sexually repressed woman evidencing fierce rage. Their literary use of this figure, however, often differs in practice. Tennant approaches gender issues for social revolution with regard to the repression of woman, while Kennedy concerns her characters with 'the personal connections and disconnections that channel their emotional well-being'.²⁵ In Kennedy's work, the body serves as an extension of the emotional self. Sex and sexuality, as they relate to the body, 'emerge as inconsequential when characters do or do not manage to connect'.²⁶ Despite the fact that they vary greatly in the ways they address gender issues, Tennant and Kennedy are similar with regard to their analysis of gender inequity. Tennant focuses on the damage suffered by women through gender dominance, while Kennedy examines the confining conditions which hinder the 'interconnections among characters as they struggle to succeed or, more often, simply to endure'.²⁷ Their characters' emotional

²⁵ March, Cristie L. 'A. L. Kennedy's introspection'. *Rewriting Scotland*. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 139.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

conditions illustrate the *quiet* catastrophes that occur all too often in modern, urban gender relationships. Their characters commonly search for spirituality to overcome familial gender trauma. The three chosen texts explore psychological states in terms of the isolation that stems from family scars. This is grounded in the abjection of socially defined gender identity as enacted through the behaviour of a split self, and results in an intensified estrangement from the self. The divided psyche, ‘the outward “good” woman, and the inner, amoral self’,²⁸ are fully expressed through mental fragmentation and are evidenced in psychological schizophrenia.

1.3.1 *Refusing the Other of Class*

Tennant specifically juxtaposes her writing with texts by James Hogg and Robert Louis Stevenson in order to signify fragmentation. By imitating the unreliable narrative voices used in earlier male texts, Tennant shows the unreliability of each character’s narrative perspective. She allows her readers to objectively uncover her characters’ repressed self-hatred and their fascination with the brooding atmosphere of Gothic horror. *The Bad Sister* engages with James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) while *Two Women of London* connects with Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886).²⁹ Just as Hogg and Stevenson elaborate on ‘the fantastic externalisation of an internal conflict’,³⁰ Tennant situates the internal conflict in the description of the divided

²⁸ Elphinstone, Margaret. ‘Contemporary Feminist Fantasy in the Scottish Literary Tradition’. *Tea and Leg Irons: New Feminist Readings from Scotland*. Ed. Caroline Gonda. (London: Open Letters, 1992), pp. 45-59 (51).

²⁹ Indicated by Tennant in a conversation with Sue Roe. Roe, Sue and Emma Tennant. ‘Women Talking About Writing’. *Women’s Writing: A Challenge to Theory*. Ed. Moira Monteith. (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986), pp. 117-153 (124).

³⁰ Elphinstone, Margaret. ‘Contemporary Feminist Fantasy in the Scottish Literary Tradition’. *Tea and Leg Irons: New Feminist Readings from Scotland*. Ed. Caroline Gonda. (London: Open Letters, 1992), pp. 45-59 (50).

female self. Tennant uses the description of the divided self to criticise the socially defined feminine and its negative psychological impact on women. The emotional tension of the divided self originates from the characters' abjection, and from their attempt to jettison the socially defined feminine that requires corporeal conformity and propriety in gender relationships. What they cast off and attempt to expel, however, does not entirely allow them repudiation since this remains both an unconscious and conscious threat to their own self-assumed clean and proper social selves. The unconscious threat is projected through the characters' psychological hallucinations, while the conscious threat is evidenced by the characters' fear of subjugation in the reality of gender relationships.

Tennant's protest against patriarchal prescription of women's maternal and matrimonial duties is characterised by the control of self-hatred and choked-up rage. Her protagonists, Jane in *The Bad Sister* and Eliza in *Two Women of London*, oscillate between the despair and desire generated by social institutions such as motherhood and marriage. Robert Wringhim's narrative in Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions* focuses on psychological realism by apparently describing how a sinner possessed by a real devil undergoes the internal battle for the justification of his soul. Tennant portrays Jane, in *The Bad Sister*, in a similar manner through schizophrenia.³¹ Jane is the illegitimate daughter of a politician who works in England and lives a libertine life; this politician owns many estates in the Scottish borders and dupes countless women who own no property. Jane's mother, Mary, employed as shop assistant in a big London store (36), was unmarried, as was her Irish grandmother. Having a mother with economic, familial, and marital deficits, Jane keenly feels society's discrimination when it comes to her birth, and she hates her own position as

³¹ Indicated by Tennant in the part of Jane Wild, in a conversation with Sue Roe. See Roe, Sue and Emma Tennant. 'Women Talking About Writing'. *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory*. Ed. Moira Monteith. (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986), pp. 117-153 (125).

a socially unmarked, illegitimate being. From childhood on, Jane rebels against the social expectations of feminine existence: 'I could see by looking straight ahead [now], instead of shaking my fringe to one side, a gesture which, over the years, had become apologetic and feminine, as if I had to admit it wasn't my right to contemplate the world' (36). As an illegitimate Scotch-Irish daughter, Jane epitomises crossing points of nation and gender, and feels a 'double otherness'.³² Beneath the crumbling shell of paternal authority lies maternal darkness: 'I shrugged at the reflection . . . hacking away with the scissors, which seemed to have taken on a determination of their own despite the protests of the owner of the hair' (35). Jane's destiny traps her within an intricate network of wishes and fears that are directed towards her father: 'Sometimes I felt I belonged to both of them [Jane's parents], and then the cottage and the kitchen seemed to grow . . . there would be infinite possibilities' (52); 'The way he looked at me was furtive and eager, like the stare of a man searching for evidence of disease on his own body' (52). Jane is initiated, because of her unmarked birth, into an ambivalent condition of extreme apprehension. On the one hand, her wish for bodily identification with her parents is interconnected with her sense of self; on the other hand, her despair amidst this bodily identification simultaneously generates the image of her female body as a 'disease' on the male body, or as an Other that exists inside her.

This internal Other deepens Jane's abjection because it threatens her autonomy. Jane's abjection derives from a recognition of her mother's bodily and emotional subjugation to her father. Jane is upset with her mother's subservient attitude to her father, especially when she mentions her father giving them a cottage: 'She [her

³² Christianson remarks on the relationship between the national identity and the position of women in society. If Scotland is situated as an Other to England, 'with England used as the dominant reference point', Scotswomen are doubly marginalised. See Christianson, Aileen. 'Gender and Nation: debatable lands and passable boundaries'. *Across the Margins*. Eds. Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 67-82 (70).

mother] always thanked him, but went on looking guilty. Why was she so uneasy, fingering the old black skirt she wore, gazing past me at the hill as if she was longing to run for it and disappear into the white mist' (52). Jane's displeasure at her mother's inappropriate modesty evokes her hatred towards her own gender identity: 'My [Jane's] legs were thin and perched in high-heeled sandals, the pale tights making them all the more ridiculous and vulnerable' (33). Jane's abjection of her mother's bodily and emotional conformity to her father gives rise to her own self-hatred and forms in her the sense of being imprisoned in the female body; this leads her to a radical desire to renounce any feminine behaviour. The feminine, however, is part of her existential integrity. The abject mother within her mind consequently forges an estranged Other within herself.

The image of self-hatred and of Kristeva's 'the Other within' is seen at the very beginning of *Strangers to Ourselves* through a foreigner who 'lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode'.³³ Kristeva asserts that it is precisely the appearance of the foreigner as a hateful symptom that 'turns "we" into a problem'.³⁴ Kristeva's readers may be shocked into an awareness of the impossibility of the term 'we'—the impossibility of the breakdown of boundaries, by the discovery or recognition of the foreigner. Kristeva indicates that 'the Other within', the foreigner, appears when the consciousness of 'my' difference arises, and that it disappears when we realise ourselves to be foreigners, 'unamenable to bonds and communities'.³⁵ This implies that in order to assure autonomy, the subject must renounce what oppresses it; it must draw a line between itself and what subjugates it so that its autonomy may be secured. Nevertheless, it is difficult to renounce a part of

³³ Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

itself since it is this very opposition upon which the subject establishes its identity. 'My' difference exists only when the abject excludes what is not 'My' but what is in fact a part of 'I'. In this regard, Jane's hatred towards the social devaluation of the feminine, as a 'foreigner within', derives from her individual awareness of socially charted differences in nation and gender. This foreigner within can be obliterated only when she recognises her internal resistance to socially privileged differences. In this sense, Jane's oppression results from internal resistance to the feminine, to the foreigner, to 'the Other within', and to the alter ego of a national, sexual and social man.

Significantly, this 'foreigner' within Jane is more clearly evidenced, and at the same time is more problematised through Jane's jealousy of Ishbel and Miranda, who are two characters who embody Jane's fragmented psychological state. Ishbel (a half-sister of Jane) and Miranda (a favorite of Jane's boyfriend) symbolise the feminine upholding of masculine standards of subjectivity. Jane covets the emotional satisfaction of femaleness embodied by these two women, despite a desire to defy her femininity. Reminded of Ishbel, 'always a slight smile of self-satisfaction at the corners of her mouth' (53), Jane sarcastically burlesques her twin sister as an 'omen' (55): 'I was her shadow, and she mine' (53). Jane both desires and depreciates Ishbel's femaleness which is familially and paternally blessed. Envyng Miranda's position in Tony's (Jane's boyfriend's) mind, Jane despises the social expectation that constructs femaleness into a sexual 'refuge' for men; she satirises Tony 'plunging in again between her [Miranda's] legs for safety—noting how it formed a wall against me, a society for my end' (106). Considering herself 'excluded from their sex' (106), Jane would rather be antithetical to this masculine paradigm of the feminine in which the feminine is reduced to a sexual corporeal subjugation, intended to 'purify women's legion souls' (106). Jane's fear of a threat to her autonomy leads her to search for the

protection from any defilement through this version of the feminine.

Kristeva argues that protection from defilement ironically entails the importance of 'women and particularly the mother'.³⁶ Her remark suggests that the identification of oneself with an image in opposition to what he/she defiles is false; instead, the defiled maternal element ironically emphasises the maternal image since the rejected feminine remains a threat to the maternal part that is inherent in the self. In Jane's relentlessness against 'the Other within', the suppressed feminine, she cannot excavate herself from the affliction of the socially devalued female. Instead, she is ironically more occupied by the shadow of the oppressed feminine and by the motherhood inside her. Regarding herself as 'the bad throw of the dice', she confesses that she is 'the double', living with dual desires of being a good woman outwardly and a 'vanished self-evil' (111) inwardly. She treats the letter M as representative both of the image of suppressed femininity and of the image of dissolution of this femininity: 'M for mother, for murder, for Meg. M for her [Miranda]. She made me a shadow, discarded by Tony before he had even met me' (111-112). Identifying Meg as part of her maternal legacy, Jane is blurred at the definition of motherhood and at the boundaries of gender identity; imagining her half-sister in a vision, which in fact reflects Jane's own mental state, Jane 'stood, as Meg had stood under the thin birches behind the cottage on Dalzell land, defiant and still . . . by throwing her darkness over it . . . Margaret . . . my Meg . . . and my mother, is this what you've given birth to?' (66). Naming herself as 'Wild' as the others do in the women's Scottish commune named Margaret (Meg), Jane endorses the 'steps of stronger women', attempting to be 'restored to life and greenness' (111). However, the passion for a radical evil with the version of Meg's 'femininity' (pretentious but destroying) can never escape falling

³⁶ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 70.

into the 'essential sacrifice' to 'red altar' (111), just as her mother, Mary, falls as a sacrifice to socially acceptable images of the feminine. It is because of this inevitable destiny of dual motherhood that Jane half-hopes that Miranda can plunge into death in her arms (145), as 'chang[ing] and dissolv[ing] as . . . she [Miranda] melt[ed] into softness, a wedding ring, a veil' (155). It is because of the shared sacrificial inclination of both maternal legacies and because of the death drive embedded in both suppressed femininity and in the subsequent radical abjection to this type of femininity, that Jane decides to break Miranda's moonstones, 'too dim to shine much in the light from the candles' (158). Jane, with the uncanny power rendered and guided by Meg, appears as a fantastic spectre approaching Miranda. Jane *sucks* her dry, in a sense of terminating the suffering both from oppression of the feminine and from the abject.

Imitating Hogg's unreliable narrative voices, Tennant allows her readers to locate themselves at an observant distance from Jane's confessions. The bloody murder of Michael Dalzell and of his legal daughter, Ishbel, appears at the very beginning of the Editor's Narrative with the discovery of Jane's body in a grave with a stick 'pierc[ing] her body just above the ribs on the left-hand side' (165), and appears again at the very end of the Editor's Note. Reading both the editor's and Jane's narratives, readers know that these murders symbolise Jane's mental drives towards her abjection. The abject, as defined by Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* as a *pharmakos*, acts as 'a scapegoat who, having been ejected, allows the city to be freed from defilement'.³⁷ Kristeva takes Oedipus the King as an illustration to suggest that Oedipus's abjection comes from the permanent ambiguity of the parts he plays without his knowledge, even when he believes he knows his role. Oedipus is in a double bind: a longing for narcissistic union with his mother and a need to renounce

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84.



this union in order to become an exclusively whole being without any maternal attachments. He ironically intends to renounce a part inherent in himself in order to become a self. Such dynamic reversals, from his patricide to his suicide, make him a being of abjection with the result that his abjection, his border of self, can be obliterated. Prohibition and the ideal coexist in a single character, signifying that the abject subject stands on the imaginary threshold of its self, as if standing on an impossible demarcation of the boundaries. Jane, with the abject of the socially acceptable images of the feminine and with her desire to terminate the threat of this abjection to her autonomy, surrenders herself as a 'scapegoat' to 'the particular',³⁸ to the witch power in her blood-thirsty murders. Kristeva stresses blood as symbolic of the abject: on the one hand, it indicates 'the impure' while it 'also refers to women, fertility, and the assurance of fecundation'.³⁹ It is 'where *death* and *femininity*, *murder* and *procreation*, *cessation of life* and *vitality* all come together'.⁴⁰ In other words, the bloodbath promises the triumph implicit in the murder and *purifies* the individual mind that has long been shackled by the ideology of fixed gender identity. Just as Hogg's 'devil' in *Confessions* may be a projection of Robert Wringhim's (the sinner's) own mentality, Tennant's personification of devil figures (Meg, Gil-Martin, and K) in *The Bad Sister*, through Jane's narratives of her own secret thoughts, desires, and fears, constructed as an invention of psychological intensity, may also be a projection of her criminal psychology to exorcise her gender trauma.

1.3.2 *Defying the Psychological Other*

³⁸ Russo cites Naomi Schor's study *Reading in Detail: aesthetics and the feminine* to stress the link between the feminine and the particular. Schor shows that the 'metaphorics of the particular' will 'give way to the strange, the peculiar, the monstrous'. See Russo, Mary. *The Female Grotesque*. (London: Routledge, 1994), p.6.

³⁹ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 96.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

Elphinstone indicates that ‘the polar twins of the Scottish Muse’⁴¹ often characterise Scottish literature as a juxtaposition of “‘the prose of extravagance’ (fantasy)’ and “‘the prose of experience’ (the pragmatic)’.⁴² Tennant’s use of psychological ambiguity is specifically characterised by those supernatural agencies that are used to project her characters’ abjection of the socially-defined feminine. In *Two Women of London*, although the characters of Jean and Ms Jekyll are presented as ‘good’ and as examples of socially defined femininity, they exhibit a shared affinity with the demonic Mrs. Hyde because they are similarly preoccupied with motherhood. Jean, however, survives in the gender-modifying society while Ms Jekyll preys upon the vitality of Mrs. Hyde. Jean engages passionately with feminist research on ‘the Gnostic Gospels and the origins of sin’ (*Two Women of London*, 199), convinced that ‘painstaking historical research is the only sure path away from prejudice and towards a new state of equality at all levels between the sexes’ (199). As a solicitor living in Scotland, Jean disagrees with the presiding feminist norm which is there tinged with ‘a combination of emotional insecurity and extreme aggression’ (199). She attempts to ‘redress the economic-social disadvantages which remain, for women’ (199), and is unwilling to ‘fall into the trap of the quixotic’ (202). Disagreeing with Mrs. Hyde’s version of feminist protest which is evidenced in a hatred for women’s distress in economic and marital conditions, Jean worries that Eliza Jekyll’s ‘charming quality—generosity’ may cause herself hurt, and ‘develop into an unattractive, even embarrassing characteristic’ (202). She considers that beneath Eliza’s deed of generosity lies ‘an apparent need to dominate the existence of another’ (203). Jean is

⁴¹ Gregory Smith is the first critic to define the Scottish method of combining the supernatural with psychological and social realism, in his book *Scottish Literature*, published in 1919. Cited by Elphinstone, Margaret. ‘Contemporary Feminist Fantasy in the Scottish Literary Tradition’. *Tea and Leg-Irons: New Feminist Readings from Scotland*. Ed. Caroline Gonda. (London: Open Letters, 1992), pp. 45-59 (48).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

antithetical, both to the radical revenge of sexual and existential threats to women adopted by Mrs. Hyde, and to the excessive conformity and generosity to the cruelty of society enacted by Eliza. She detests ‘a mother of such suicidal and self-sacrificial dimensions’ (203) since it may entail the condition that both sides are defeated and wounded.

The novel draws attention to the social emphasis on self-sacrifice in feminine motherhood, and it explores women’s abjection through this identification. Mrs. Hyde is an embittered single mother who murders her rapist, while Eliza suffers from the power of capitalism and the betrayal of love. Gender is foregrounded as the power of capitalism prevails. Not a medical doctor, as in Stevenson’s narrative, but an Art-School-trained manager of the Shade Gallery (‘Shade,’ as if gothically preordained) (185), Eliza cannot reconcile herself to the societal submissive role of the feminine after her career crumbles following marriage, children and abandonment. While serving as ‘an advertisement’ in the Shade Gallery, Eliza’s beauty becomes the ‘official version’ of the gallery when it is ‘declared open by Sir James’ (182). Female beauty is visualised, filmed, photographed and, in particular, is gendered for the public through Mara’s camera: ‘She [Eliza Jekyll] hardly stiffens at all when the dirty old man slides his arm round her waist . . . and keeps it there for the remainder of his speech’ (182). Female beauty, as embodied by Ms Jekyll, is ostensibly objectified and becomes exploited in her capitalist society just as the fictional editor comments: ‘The media leave us in no doubt that rapaciousness and a “loadsamoney” economy have come to represent the highest values in the land’ (176). Eliza lacks the power of Sir James Lister, owner not only of the Shade Gallery but also of ‘the massive new supermarket up by Kensal Road’ (182). When James unexpectedly ‘close[s] down the Shade Gallery and announce[s] plans to develop the site’ (236), Eliza loses her job and, at the same time, suffers as her marriage falls apart. As an ever-successful,

unencumbered woman, undergoing the breakdown of her economy and her subsequent abandonment by her ex-husband, Eliza turns out to be the heiress to Mrs. Hyde's self-sacrificial revenge as a pungent protest to the repression and hypocrisy deeply rooted in gender identity.

Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* describes the abject as 'a non-assimilable alien, a monster, a tumor, a cancer'.⁴³ The abject, which is seen as a disease of the subject, cannot be obliterated unless it is removed along with the subject against which it is opposed:

The abject shatters the wall of repression and its judgments. It takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away—it assigns it a source in the non-ego, drive, and death. Abjection is a resurrection that has gone through death (of the ego). It is an alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, of new significance.⁴⁴

Kristeva reveals the ambiguous quality of the abject: it is both destructive and constructive. According to Kristeva, too much attachment to the part of what the subject repels sustains the 'I'; however, the lapse of the Other breaks down the desire of 'I'. The abject, therefore, is precisely that violence of mourning for the Other that has already been lost. In other words, we can discern that what is expelled as precisely that which is subsequently mourned. Mrs. Hyde and Ms. Jekyll's abjection of the feminine's exploitation inevitably leads to the eradication of their personal egos and of the male subjectivity which first prescribed those egos. In *Two Women of London*, we are told that the supposed rapist is killed by Mrs. Hyde's attacking instrument with a parrot 'deep into his throat, with its beak' (228). The parrot is also shared by Eliza Jekyll as a head on her umbrella 'with a long, elegant handle' (229). The umbrella, like a shield, symbolises the function of protection and safety. When the function is

⁴³ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

shattered, the parrot, with its ability to imitate, counterattacks the repression it suffers. Drawing our attention to the mother being which is coded as 'abject',⁴⁵ Kristeva insists that it is 'the logic of *exclusion* that causes the abject to exist'.⁴⁶ She implies that the abject, which the social symbolic of the feminine is unable to completely repress, should seek co-existence. Mrs. Hyde and Ms Jekyll's objection to the socially acceptable feminine, the Other within, must co-exist with the demonic potential of the feminine to achieve mental balance.

We may ask whether Tennant permits other female characters to escape from the soul's disease, from the abjection of the feminine in socially defined gender roles. Tennant's mimicry of Stevenson's narrative arrangement denies any omniscient voice and provides 'indeterminacy common to Gothic and postmodern fictions, undermining didacticism'.⁴⁷ Uncertainty is highlighted through an ironic tone when the fictional editor comments on the female characters' fervent but ambivalent concern with the rapist's murderer: 'Possibly some of that vulnerability accounts for her [Mira's] pictures' (184). Tennant is commenting on an ambiguous attitude held by a group of middle-class women. Although they condemn Mrs. Hyde for threatening their lives simply by existing, they also need her, and parasitically feed on her vitality for social injustice. The internal conflict is evident as they are 'each one a part of her [Mara's] composite portrait [of Mrs. Hyde] . . . each had been a victim of rape. By the same man?' (185). We see every face implicit in 'the Face of Revenge' (184) at the opening of Mara's exhibition where Mara films Mrs. Hyde and comments: 'the extreme unease experienced by all the women in their different ways when confronted by this spectacle is due to there being something "unnatural" about Mrs. Hyde' (198).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁴⁷ Anderson, Carol. 'Emma Tennant, Elspeth Barker, Alice Thompson: Gothic Revisited'. *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Eds. Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 117-130 (121).

The group of women, who occasionally assemble in Robina's boarding-house-cum-club for women and who capitalise on the power of 'liberated middle-class women', manifest the potentially demonic nature of the feminine. Kristeva emphasises that abjection is coextensive with the social and symbolic order, on the individual as well as on the collective level.⁴⁸ This group of women unconsciously shares the abject, becoming conscious of it as soon as the social dimension of the 'violent man' (pictured here as the rapist) is constituted. Ms Jekyll's up-market house is built upon Mrs. Hyde's rotting basement, a juxtaposition that Jean Hastie describes in her journal as 'almost surreal' (224), as if 'there was a feeling of benign, neighborhood watch: a truly communal spirit in the air' (223). Though disagreement over the radical revenge adopted by Mrs. Hyde is individually articulated, the abject of the repressed and the exploited feminine is communally shared.

1.3.3 Fighting with the Other of Incestuous Trauma

While Tennant illustrates the abject of the feminine through a communal commitment of women, Kennedy grounds it in personal connections and disconnections through the emotional aspects of her characters. In Kennedy's *So I am Glad*, the salient motif of self-contained and self-repressed hatred towards the subjugation of the feminine is revealed, not only through Jennifer's coerced inclusion in her parents' perversion but also in her desire for intimacy when she is an adult, especially as it is accompanied by the recurring fear of damage that is concomitant with such intimacy. Kennedy configures a strongly self-contained protagonist who is

⁴⁸ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 65-67.

silenced by sexual abuse but who is angered by the sadistic role her character has to play in order to evade sexual exploitation; through this role, she points out the intellectual solitude and emotional destitution that is found in the Grotesque that is hiding there. Jennifer's lengthy asides and flashbacks epitomise her 'intellectual scepticism'⁴⁹ and emotional isolation. Recounting her own repressed hurt as caused by the strangeness of her parents who perform sex in front of her and need her for 'their own, closed reasons' (*So I am Glad*, 71), Jennifer responds by seeking to keep 'her house safe' from 'their gritted teeth, their damp faces, [and] inquisitive eyes' (71). Being forced to see violent sex 'silently' is another method of sexually castrating the feminine. By addressing her strange 'guest' (her father) in the early morning, Jennifer assumes emotional indifference: 'Good morning. Whoever you are' (66). Her 'frightening lack of comprehension' is ironically 'balanced by a wonderful absence of fear' (66); her self-composure undertakes the patriarchal gaze of the calm 'nice' girl. The extent of Jennifer's wounding is foregrounded in the fact that the social part of her mind has been ripped open violently in her parents' sexuality, and that the trauma of the lack of paternal love is simmering inside her when she finds herself in bed facing the insult to her body. The sexuality of the father as enacted upon the daughter invokes an incestuous taboo; to speak of paternal love, as a woman, is an ability denied to Jennifer.

Psychological revelations are carefully enfolded in sentences that deny her parents' roles in her own self-fashioning: 'I will tell you soon about my parents . . . but when I do, you'll already know they played no part in making me how I am' (6). Jennifer's complacent confession to her readers in Kennedy's ironic elaboration

⁴⁹ Dunnigan indicates that Kennedy's writing 'has a measure of intellectual scepticism' but is a 'sensual rather than an intellectual process', a 'spiritual experience of enormous power'. See Dunnigan, Sarah M. 'A. L. Kennedy's Longer Fiction: Articulate Grace'. *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Eds. Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 144-155 (144).

disguises truth and incorporates ambiguous gender attitudes; the overt denial of her parents' influence on her signals the hidden refusal of the existence of the vulnerable feminine scarred in her mind. This refusal forms the ground of one's self's borderline and entails his/her strangeness to what is initially familiar. Kristeva emphasises a 'confusion of boundaries' as one of 'the most intense forms of estrangement':

Visible or invisible? Inside me or outside? They disturb demarcation between interior and exterior space and unsettle the speaking subject in his customary dwelling-place. To write, to experience the time of dazzling obscurity, is to become a stranger to oneself and the familiar.⁵⁰

Kristeva's notion of the abject conjures up a memory of the self, but also emphasises the demarcation between the interior and exterior of the speaking subject when it is produced. To obliterate this barrier is to become estranged from the being of the abject, from the old-established sense of self, and from the repelled but familiar part of oneself. According to Kristeva, what is rejected remains on the periphery of consciousness; it is a looming presence, as seen in the case of death and with regard to the mother. Kristeva implies that because this repelled companion haunts a person through the whole of one's life, the best way to terminate lasting emotional disturbance is to obscure the borders that this abject marks, and hence to become a stranger to oneself, and to the familiar.

From this perspective of Kristeva's view of the self's borderline, for Jennifer, to become a stranger to, and therefore to unconsciously obscure the castrated feminine (the conformity of female body), is the safest strategy to evade the resentful fury that surfaces against the emotional injuries caused by her parents. When the headmaster tells Jennifer that her mother was killed in a car accident, Jennifer indicates that her slight irritation soon faded (213). Jennifer's childhood should have been blessed by maternal love and protection, even with the presence of parental sexual abuse;

⁵⁰ Smith, Anna. *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement*. (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), p. 39.

however, she is *silenced* by her parents' perverted habit, and is misled by her mother's sadomasochistic version of the feminine. In adulthood, in order to escape from the dangers of being female, Jennifer assumes the role of a sadist in her sexual relationship with Steven, but this role is precisely the opposite of what she expels. Being a sadist, Jennifer is reminded of the trauma of gender abuse, and remains emotionally conflicted. There is no way for Jennifer to repel either side of the abject except to obscure the trauma her parents imposed on her, and to deny her parents' influence over her. Kennedy suggests that Jennifer works upon subtexts when she dreams,⁵¹ and that Jennifer's childhood abuse cannot find exit except when she imposes upon herself a new role as stranger to her injured self—a stranger without emotional 'moles' (7).

Both the loss of love, and the feminine's subsequent estrangement mark the beginning of Jennifer's sexual and moral questioning. While violence is the 'natural expression of the masculine in its purest form', chastity, or 'in an extreme form—repression', paves the way for 'the conditions [of] victimisation'.⁵² Jennifer's sexual repression strikes deep at roots that manifest themselves in the emotionally sacrificial nature of a masochist. This is demonstrated by her sadomasochistic relationship with Steven, and this relationship can be seen as an example of a pungent transgression against fixed gender identity. Jennifer treats Steven's body sadistically, while telling readers about her method of transgression: 'Want to see it? Close your eyes now if you don't' (131). The roles of a sadomasochistic couple are reversed: sadism is performed by the female figure upon the male; the masculine (being a masochist) is in the abject position. Sadism symbolically aims to exert the power of the other version of the feminine (the wily, irrational and demonic potential) over the

⁵¹ Kennedy, A. L. *Critical Quarterly*. 37:4 (1995): 52-55. p. 53.

⁵² Day, William Patrick. *In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 80-81.

masculine. Jennifer cannot 'stop' herself from the sexual domination that she asserts as Captain Bligh and which liberates her from any feminine identification: 'Bligh never was—in any historical sense—anything like a lady' (91). As Jennifer sexually abuses Steven—sexually silences him—her childhood gender trauma is redeemed as if she is 'finding an edge and stepping beyond it and gripping that edge and throwing it away' (127). Through her 'silencing castration' of Steven's body who as a ghost can never do any empirical reaction, Jennifer desires to kill her internal Other—the image of ever victimised feminine side of self, with a view to taking a masculine role in gender relationship. This 'silencing', however, due to its non-empirical but supernatural experience, can never serve as a 'substantial' obliteration of Jennifer's gender trauma because she must fight with her rejected feminine side of self imaginatively.

Physical mockery of sadism connotes Jennifer's most poignant fury not only towards social repression of the female body but also towards her own inability to obliterate the memory of sexual abuse. The image of the *feminised* vulnerable child remains a scar that she cannot eradicate. Jennifer ridicules the perversion in her urban construction of love through the means of peculiar sex. She announces her personal definition of love. When growing closer to Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac, she throws her handcuffs into a skip with its empty syringes as evidence of 'our public sickness' (95). When Savinien leaves, Jennifer falls prey to darker desires, assaulting Steven so badly in a one-night sadomasochistic stand that he cannot work for a week. Although she is reluctant to admit her deep-rooted and resentful mental fury, especially when at work as a radio announcer, a 'professional enunciator' (37), her despair is well-broadcasted by a member of the personnel staff: 'I said I would certainly bear her suggestions in mind and she warned of the dangers of unexpected rage. Presumably she was unaware of how personally dangerous she would have found my

expressed rage' (226). This black humour, characteristic of Kennedy's writing in moments of particular despair or difficulty,⁵³ comes as a shock to the reader. It reveals an ironic comparison that conceals the modern relationship of hesitancy between the fear of facing the destruction brought by the rage and bravery of confronting it.

In musings upon her own disintegrated and distorted state within patriarchal culture, Jennifer seems to identify herself with Savinien, a ghost soldier, writer, and *philosophe*, who returns from the dead of the seventeenth century to a Glasgow boarding house. This legendary seventeenth-century libertine's desire to cast off the shackles of tradition and authority parallels Jennifer's longing to expel the values of the feminine; their reactions towards violence and authority, however, are certainly different. While Savinien performs physical violence to fight against authority, Jennifer adopts psychic indifference as a protest against gender violence. However, her love towards Savinien remains unfulfilled due to her long-term habitual emotional closure. Jennifer writes a love letter to Savinien, a 'textual shape or form',⁵⁴ but never allows her recipient to read it. This 'textual form' of love (a non-explicit literal language), in written in response to Savinien's letter in French—a language incomprehensible to Jennifer—and shows the uncertainty and insecurity of her emotional intimacy with Savinien. Jennifer has long accustomed herself to emotional disconnection. She desires emotional intimacy but fears the harm it may cause since she considers loving as the forerunner to death.

Abjection, in Jennifer's case, is formed in her biological development. Her biological abuse castrates her spontaneous desire for love: the loss of the harmonious

⁵³ Dickson, Beth. 'Intimacy, Violence and Identity: The Fiction of A. L. Kennedy'. *Revista canaria de estudios ingleses*. 41 (2000): 133-144. p. 143.

⁵⁴ Dunnigan, Sarah M. 'A. L. Kennedy's Longer Fiction: Articulate Grace'. *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Eds. Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 144-155 (148).

unity with her mother through the intrusion of her father (the symbolic order) hinders her ability to give maternal love and makes her believe in the entanglement of damage and love. Savinien's extroverted self-complacent love mirrors Jennifer's introverted imaginary love. Though this pair of lovers share a common desire for intimacy, they dread approaching it: 'I knew the love he meant, the one that included darkness and loving on alone' (236). Savinien's love is shadowed with narcissism due to his own militaristic but deplorable history. Savinien grows in darkness with a history of being 'struck down very slowly in Paris' for being 'a bad atheist' (274). His narcissism derives from the fact that he models himself as a national hero in order to defy military tyranny and to counteract the local authority. His romantic narcissism, however, is never fulfilled. Because although his heroic deeds deepens his internal propensity for violence, it does not bring him freedom from authorial oppression; Savinien's internal violence comes from external physical damage just like Jennifer's. As he slowly regains those memories of violence in his previous life, the spectral Savinien reveals a life of death and damage that strikes a chord with the taciturn Jennifer: 'There was a tenderness in him I'd never managed to find' (129), states Jennifer; however, 'he also had a pain about him I didn't want to feel' (129). The tenderness of Savinien, who also has a violent past and can therefore understand Jennifer, is used to redress her rage at her parents' perversion. Jennifer's 'produced' calmness finds itself within the redemptive grace of love: "'Don't ever let me hurt you, Savinien. Even if I ask.'" "Ah." He smiled into me. "No, I won't let you do that. But neither will you"' (208). They communicate, by 'common instinct', the fear of love. Each completes the other, however, in a vision of magnitude; Jennifer's aversion to all personal involvement is metaphorically countered by Savinien's romantic narcissism. Nevertheless, this love, though it would provide redemption to Jennifer's gender trauma, can never fully be achieved. The death is anticipated not only in Savinien's

drug addiction but also in the sheer miracle of Savinien's existence (216). Kennedy leaves to her protagonist an unfulfilled act of love, an everlasting quest for spiritual redemption from pain.

1. 4 *Existential Dilemma induced by the Other*

By showing the cultural encoding of the feminine as obedient, Tennant and Kennedy indicate their characters' anxious and persistent efforts to find in their own voices aboriginal selves that can re-create their worlds. In their Gothic world, pain defines self but its backlash leads to self-destruction as an ultimate act of self-definition.⁵⁵ A quest for self-creation, for self-comprehension, and particularly for self-introspection, predicts Gothic selves' survivals of Kennedy and Tennant. Undertaking pain paradoxically serves as the ultimate solvent of the Grotesque; it resides within the confrontation with this grotesque but it is defective in taste. David Bakan notes that pain serves as a role in the decentralisation of ego. This very decentralisation occurs while the self identifies with 'what hurts me', with the 'threat of death' 'which was once integral to the ego'.⁵⁶ When the entire soul touches the powers of horror that sustain but potentially murder itself, the uncanny emerges as custodian of a more enhanced power that obliterates the border of self and ushers the limited self into an infinite realm. The infinite appears when the finite limits of human body are surpassed. The very border between life and what lies beyond life has been interrupted, with the external world uncannily 'infecting' the limits of the human body.

A version of femininity may provide an example of what exceeds the symbolic

⁵⁵ Day points out that the self is defined through conflict, as a giver or receiver of pain in a sadomasochistic dynamic in which pleasure defines identity without heightened conflict and division. See Day, William Patrick. *In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 85.

⁵⁶ Bakan, David. *Disease, Pain & Sacrifice: Towards a Psychology of Suffering*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 76 & 78.

order, but the way of excess adopted by this version is always at the same time marked and defined by the symbolic. The protagonists in Tennant's and Kennedy's gothic narratives rebel against familial and sexual relationships that reduce the feminine to corporeal conformity. Defying the internal reaction towards the jettisoned version of the feminine, however, is the final pursuit of self-satisfaction. Tennant and Kennedy, through the semiotic significance of supernatural mediators, commonly invite romantic encounters with the uncanny in their portrayals of gender trauma. The spectral is an intensified version of the conflicts between the self and its internal Other. This version of conflicts, however, is the site in which the self can live with the internal Other, with the abject, and therefore may see the world whole. For Tennant and Kennedy, the romantic ideal generated by the encounter with supernatural mediators promises a state where the protagonists *undertake* the gender trauma again in order to *erase* the patterns of domination and submission central to masculine and feminine stereotypes. The romantic ideal, an autonomous and forceful agent that makes creation possible, dissolves the internal rebellion of a gothically sentimental self. It assembles all conflicting aspects of the self and puts them to creative liberation. By doing so, characters engender themselves to assert the power of self. Tennant's and Kennedy's elaborate psychological transformations involved in pain and pleasure, in this regard, have both political and aesthetic ramifications. In this section, I will explore how the characters undertake the masculine mode of the feminine, confront their abjection, and resolve their psychological grotesqueness.

In *The Bad Sister*, the feminine is repressively objectified but politically appropriated. By the corner supermarket at the end of the street lies Paradise Island, a house for homosexual women who always 'smile sardonically' (39) at the world. For the women, to unwrap the 'bright tartan package' (39) is to open Pandora's box, to

probe into the mental state of urban heroines. Until their unwrapping, Pandora's boxes hold 'fear of closed spaces and fear of open spaces and a drowsiness while operating machinery' (39). After they 'pull and tear at the little white worms of paper that make the wadding', the box 'lies open and shallow' (39). The women's confrontation with the fear of imprisonment foreshadows Jane's amusement in schizophrenia; here the discovery of mental openness anticipates Jane's psychological transformation. In a Sunday lunch which Jane refers to as 'a cementing thing for couples', the Yorkshire pudding after the 'bleeding meat' serves as a male strategy to entrap women for their own desires: the pudding 'produc[es] a drowsiness', 'a soft acceptance of everything' (47). Jane's affection is filled with scepticism when she interrogates the autonomy of men: 'How would he manage without me?' (47). After sexually exploiting the flesh of women, men flatter women to cater to the image of their own integrated subjectivity. The food arouses Jane's negative but curious appetite when she is passively positioned within a 'male'-oriented economy of property and desire in which the male characters use the female characters as a 'mirror' of alterity, affirming an image of their own integrated subjectivity.

Jane's mother, Mary, is engaged in a commercialised sexual relationship with her fiancé. While buying Mary 'white calfskin gloves', Mr Dalzell moulds Mary's affection to 'just the right size' (7). Mocking her mother's 'fitt[ing] in the world like a glove' (71), Jane regards the 'appearance of enduring stability' (75) as shaping the feminine into animals. Jane renounces the style of clothes that Tony favours; she prefers jeans and jackets and calls them 'magical garments' which 'transcend sex and wealth and individuality' (79). As Sedgwick suggests, the 'character' is anchored in the image of the 'quasi-linguistic inscription of surfaces'.⁵⁷ Clothes, a sign of language,

⁵⁷ Sedgwick notes that the marking of flesh and the marking with blood of veils are quasi-linguistic inscriptions. See Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*. (New York and London: Methuen, 1986 [1976]), pp. 149-158.

subjugate women into a corporeal dimension. Jane chooses to dress herself in invisibility (79) to announce her own autonomy rather than in 'the ballerina dress' (154) to be assorted to 'tarnished sequins' (154). Any symbol of femininity such as ballerina dress here is rejected by Jane to announce her refusal of social subjugation of female body as a flowery doll. However, when Stephen, the young clergyman who regards the female commune (the women's house) as being like the 'front parlour of a grim Victorian brothel' (21), gives her a necklace with a crucifix symbolising the faith, Jane wears it, intending to be 'translated into another state' from 'the known state to the unknown' (87). Diving down the front of Jane's shirt and resting between her breasts, the crucifix produces a shudder through her body (87). Stephen suggests to Jane: 'If you are frightened, why not use it?' (87). Jane is initiated into confronting her Other within, her abjection. The faith embodied in the sacrifice of Christ triggers Jane's fear of death but also valorises her own faith in transgression. The crucifix, with a semiotic allusion to faith in truth, compels Jane to go through the truth of her abjection and announce the 'truth' about her.

Patricia Huntington notes that Kristeva regards the semiotic *chora* as an attempt to explore 'the excluded feminine dimensions of language, e.g., nonmeaning, nonbeing, absence'.⁵⁸ Relatively, symbolic dimensions of language produce meaning, being, and presence. In other words, the excluded feminine dimension of language is emblematic of the negative capability, rather than representative of radical declaration. The absence of meaning, the state of nonbeing, is precisely the negative capability that upholds all of the produced meaning, or the being, and the presence of language. These feminine dimensions of language have never been excluded but metaphorically exist to sustain the presence of produced meaning. It is upon the feminine dimensions

⁵⁸ Huntington, Patricia. *Ecstatic Subjects, Utopia, and Recognition*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. xx.

of language that masculine dimensions of language build their subjectivities. From this perspective, the long-term, repellent, masculine mode of the feminine no longer stands in an unfavourable situation but now calls attention to the fact that the male characters use the female characters as a 'mirror' of alterity, thereby affirming an image of their own integrated subjectivity. The excluded feminine dimension of language is symbolically retraced in Jane's acceptance of the necklace, an action of assuming the nonbeing. She confronts her abjection towards the corporealised feminine, and at the same time announces the enduring virtue of courage. Without this courageous undertaking, the oppressed character will appeal to the evil power to redress her affliction. This is embodied in Mrs Marten, the affected and overly feminine mother of Jane's boyfriend, who is the most worldly but also the most terrifying figure in the novel. Being the most 'conventional nightmarish, Knightsbridge sort of lady', as Tennant describes this figure, Mrs Marten 'carries a vast load of repressed power and evil'.⁵⁹ All her white outfit--her white petal hat, high white shoes and little pearly powder--compact into her silver gaze she tries to fit her deadly-white face (153). Under the costume of all whiteness (a color symbolic of purity and peace) lurks a demonic and subversive heart.

Mrs Marten is a masked version of Meg. While Mrs Marten expresses her rage through her costume, a 'rigidified body' 'preserved in lava' (103), Meg speaks furiously through the 'redness of a bloodshot eye' (100). Both Mrs Marten and Meg suck life out of Jane: the former distresses her to poor health and the latter gives her the power of magic arts to destroy. Jane appeals to the uncanny power to approach her 'dark, unknown enemy' (127). To the reader's amazement, this unknown enemy is none other than Gil-Martin, whose 'shadow fall[s] over' Jane in the same way that

⁵⁹ Indicated by Tennant in the part of Mrs Marten, in a conversation with Sue Roe. See Roe, Sue and Emma Tennant. 'Women Talking About Writing'. *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory*. Ed. Moira Monteith. (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986), pp. 117-153 (134).

Tony's body pulled over hers (127). In order to 'remove any proper claim to identity' (126), Jane must embark on another journey (127) with Meg's magic power, a journey into the abject of the repressed body. Once Meg calls Gil-Martin, giving herself the powers she needs to coerce Jane, Gil-Martin becomes too strong for Jane and thus claims Jane's soul (166). Tennant is here parodying the male demon in Hogg's work. Gil-Martin in *The Bad Sister* is no longer the demonic figure, representative of Calvinist repression, who in Hogg's narrative plagued a young man in the seventeenth century, but is figuratively a source of evil which provides power for Jane but at the same time exerts his power over her. A poignant irony is implicitly drawn to inform the reader of men's exploitation of the enduring feminine. In order to counteract the realistic male hegemony, Jane must paradoxically appropriate the frightening male evil power to solve her gender trauma but simultaneously, she also falls prey to the power.

As Tennant informs her readers, when the male poet calls down the female muse whenever he likes, the female muse will call down another woman, 'who gives her a nasty kick on the shin'.⁶⁰ Jane must confront Meg, representative of an extreme feminist, and then trace Meg's whereabouts to Gil-Martin, signaling paternal oppression; then her abjection may dissolve. Jane recalls her vision through the magic crystal ball:

Tony and my body are still locked . . . a feeling of airlessness and suffocation as the room fills up . . . Meg has a red and white spotted scarf on her head . . . Gil-Martin--for I know it is him--is staring into the fire. In my peace and emptiness, I circle over him. He doesn't look up, but I have no need to see his face. We had rough times together when we were children, he and I! Then I lost him. (129)

Tennant portrays the dissolution of gender identity as relying on the psychological

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125. Tennant indicated here that *The Bad Sister* was taking up the idea that a woman has another woman in her, and the two are warring.

transformation *after* internalising suffering. This internalisation of suffering for the sake of psychological transformation echoes Kristeva's insistence on interior transcendence. While rejecting a 'transcendent exterior', Kristeva, states Anna Smith, is 'fascinated with moments when the real and the imaginary coincide'.⁶¹ Jane must investigate the interior source of pain, dig out the abject of the female body, and undertake oppression again; then she announces the 'truth' of the feminine. As she indicates at the very end of her journal, she gives Meg what she needed--a symbolic act of removing the abject--and she marches towards Gil-Martin--a symbolic act of dissolving gender trauma. In the process of approaching the abject, Jane justifies the irreducibility of the feminine, the virtual spiritual dimension of the feminine, and courage in feminine endurance. This forbearance of pain paradoxically generates the power of liberation.

The image of objectified women is most explicitly expressed in *Two Women of London*. The Shade Gallery parodies the understanding that the beauty of women is positioned and appraised as a product of art. Mara's camera successfully captures 'the woman in red' (183), dressed in a scarlet skirt, who is 'clearly no expert with this type of machine' (183). The costumed, imprisoned body with grill-like scarlet limitation carries a vigorous heart, waiting to expedite the suppression she suffers. When Eliza meets Sir James Lister for a Valentine's Day lunch before their marriage, Eliza's 'soft and vulnerable' smiles, though amiable and complacent, definitely deny the 'butter [to] melt in her mouth' (226). She knows well that the butter comes 'along with every other damn thing' (226) of oppression made by men. After the close of the gallery, the butter indeed no longer functions as flattering to woman in the dinner as if praising a product of art but, as expected, is followed by the deprivation of marital and economic

⁶¹ Smith notes that the semiotic appears luminously outside the body and that the site is 'enigmatic, resistant to interpretation'. See Smith, Anna. *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement*. (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), p. 39.

bliss produced by her ex-husband, Sir James Lister. The 'omens of bloody murder' (228) coming with the 'nocturnal visitants', with 'the cry of an owl' (229) anticipate Eliza's 'sobbing fit' (245) in the darkness at night. Eliza's melancholy imprisonment in her house built on Mrs Hyde's rotting basement make her patterned after the 'bad karma' of the evil woman, Mrs Hyde. Eliza's perfect beauty is in sharp contrast to Mrs Hyde's 'hunched trembling' appearance; in this fragmentation, Eliza's beauty enfolds her misery. Her beauty demands 'medical attention' (245) since it epitomises the scientific ideal of the female. Eliza's misery finds no exit except by resorting to the medication of science: what constitutes oppression dissolves the oppressed.

In *Desire in Language*, Kristeva suggests that poetic language functions 'at the cost of reactivating this repressed instinctual, maternal element'.⁶² Kristeva explains:

Poetic language is within the economy of signification itself that the questionable subject-in-process appropriates to itself this archaic, instinctual, and maternal territory; thus it simultaneously prevents the word from becoming mere sign and the mother from becoming an object like any other--forbidden.⁶³

Kristeva suggests that the subject-in-process in its search for the self ultimately finds its inherent instinctual and maternal territory, and intends to activate its long forbidden part (the repressed instinctual, maternal element), preventing it from becoming merely a sign. Only when physical beauty as a visual form, a semiotic sign of language, returns to the physical realm may female beauty be redressed to the spiritual dimension. The destruction of Eliza's physical beauty is satirised in the overdoses prescribed by doctors. The parody is highlighted by Dr. Frances Crane's memoir. Dr. Crane narrates with a condemning tone while recalling the name on the back of the envelope given to her by Eliza: 'London's most notorious doctor--a man

⁶² Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language*. Ed. Leon Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia UP, 1980), p. 136.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

who had deliberately allowed the deaths from overdoses of at least two world-famous rock stars' (252). Readers know from Dr. Crane's tone that this medical professional indirectly killed Eliza and Mrs Hyde. Dr. Crane knows that Eliza indulges herself through an addiction to Ecstasy, 'largely unknown in its long term effects' (252). The tone justifies Eliza's view that Dr. Crane is cool to her, 'disapproving her way of life and general state of mind' (250). As the doctor treats Mrs Hyde for anxiety, prescribing 'Anxian' to her, so does she also regard Eliza's self-destructive withdrawal as 'Heroin' withdrawal symptoms (254-5). Eliza's corporeal beauty is ironically abused by the scientific mechanics that uphold it.

Rather than drawing attention to how the evil can be found within professional's experiments regarding the dual nature of mankind as expressed in Stevenson's narrative, Tennant is concerned with the loss of humanity in professionals. Dr. Crane, a female medical professional, acknowledges the importance of learning the 'subject of personality disorders and their causes' (255) inherent in both the psychological and social dimensions, but she ultimately fails to understand her patients' maladies of the soul. She is blind to the social (outside) treatment of the female and dies of shock of Eliza's psychological (inside) effects. Tennant's gothic narrative provides a 'polarising of inside and outside' with which Eliza, 'particularly in a sexist society, has an invaded life by a social structure that marks off economic and political life as outside'.⁶⁴ Eliza's courage in applying scientific treatment to her body destroys her physical beauty and paradoxically justifies her feminine compliance through the durability of virtue. As the fictional editor testifies in postscript: 'the sensation of pure violence that poured through me was the most wonderful sensation' (262). The female bodily obedience to medical violence is the only strategy Eliza may adopt to obliterate the

⁶⁴ Holland and Sherman mention the polarising of inside and outside in the part of psychosocial experience. See Holland, Norman N. and Sherman, Leona F. 'Gothic Possibilities'. *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*. 3: 2 (Winter 1977): 279-294. p. 288.

physical oppression that the economic and political (outside) world inflicts upon her. Anna Smith indicates that 'for Kristeva, poetic language was the key to estranging perception and, more ambitiously, all thought, because it introduced a heterogeneous space into signifying structures and subjective identity'.⁶⁵ The female body, as the ultimate semiotic signifier, re-engages itself into the estranging social expectation of the female body but anticipates the erasure of this expectation. Mrs Hyde and Eliza's self-sacrificial infliction of *pain* upon the female body predicts the *pleasure* of obliterating the identity imposed upon it; the psychological transformation involves a political displacement of the relationship between body and gender identity.

Undertaking pain as a harbinger of death and thus as a decentralisation of the ego is likewise implied in Kennedy's *So I am Glad*. Jennifer's depiction of the 'moles' as emotions at the very beginning in her narrative foreshadows the protagonist's unexpected inner drive to merge herself into the vexation of pain generated by gender trauma. She indicates that though 'the world is full of sharp little edges and nasty corners', it paradoxically helps to 'protect both the moles and their minders' (6). Her remarks imply that she still may 'dig' out the 'black little mole', to be an 'indivisible' being (108) while also returning to the 'sharp little edges and nasty corners'. Later, Kennedy elaborately reveals the slight degree of spontaneous engagement with the sense of pain through the metaphor of the 'injured pigeon': 'Almost all of its tail is missing--only the feathers are gone, but it cannot fly' (85). Jennifer identifies herself with the injured pigeon: just as the bird is deprived of its feathers so she is offended by her own body while being sexually abused. She cannot liberate her mind, having been 'castrated' in gender terms just as the bird has been deprived of its capability to fly.

⁶⁵ Smith, Anna. *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement*. (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), p. 5.

Significantly, what Kennedy says about pain may just as truthfully be said about violence. In *So I am Glad*, violence is more typically functional: it aggravates pain while distracting the ego aware of it. This distraction does not exorcise pain; on the contrary, it puts the ego into a more intense engagement with pain. In other words, violence, in Kennedy's vocabulary, marks the *limits* of representation: it uncovers the emotional erosion of self. Jennifer's silence and indifference is the most profound violence towards the external world of brutality as well as towards her inner world of insensitivity. In an instant global communication, Jennifer is witness to a twenty-four hour spectacle of violence both physically real and psychologically stimulating:

In the first place I tried to keep myself separated from the images of the news I had to broadcast. It was all very well to talk about gassing whole villages, publicly anatomizing children, cosmically and domestically designed disasters - what I didn't want to consider were the faces involved. Now here were all the images I'd avoided and more. A plastic toy suitcase, a coloured fancy hat, the light of intelligence in a pair of eyes make a photograph instantly unmanageable. I could neither look nor look away. (132)

Periodic media debate over child smacking in a way of graphic but fantastic depiction, as if violence were commonly accepted as an ordinary amusement in daily life.

Jennifer comments:

Even the most distressing snaps became, after a while, part of my expected insensitivity. I could pick up any headline SECRET JACUZZI SEX LIFE OF NECROPHILE VOYEUR - PICTURES with not even a shiver. I had been successfully numbed. (132)

Physical contiguity and emotional distance co-exist in a single violent action. Actually, violence projectively filters the world through an emotionally incompetent but laden story: it denies personal embodiment but shapes the construction of an inner world. Jennifer's obsession with achieving a sense of painlessness is indeed marked by its absence of *pain* but also ironically by the absence of its opposite, *pleasure*. Remaining apathetic towards violence evidently cannot solve the pain of isolation but, on the

contrary, reinforces the rigorous isolation of the individual etched against the backdrop of society.

Jennifer's sado-masochism, a form of physical violence, is the only stance different from her habitualised silence; however, it is still symptomatic of apathy. She wonders 'if all of that formerly naval brutality hadn't been a little distraction from a more consistent cruelty - the kind you will always trawl behind you if you're used to being permanently calm' (230). This physical version of violence remains internalised, in contrast with Savinien's straightforward violence to express his political anger. Savinien reminisces to Jennifer that he was once in a bloody uprising against corrupt monarchical and ecclesiastical power in his previous life. He states that pain was an accepted feature of political life: 'Do you know in Henry's time four thousand similar gentlemen died to gain the honour they had always had?' (97). Now in this second existence he duels with a drug dealer called James in open waste ground, in public space, in contrast to Jennifer's privatised violence. This discrepancy between their inclinations in different forms of violence perhaps explains why Kennedy chooses this legendary chivalric character to engage in a battle of love, in 'a combat of hearts' (87) with taciturn Jennifer. For Savinien, love, like dueling, is a delicate warfare, 'demanding expression of virtuosity in the point' (87-88), whereas love, for Jennifer, in Savinien's sword-fencing is a deep wound which leaves her 'opened like a fish to hurt with one simple movement, one deep touch' (174). Jennifer's internalised pain from bodily violence mirrors the bloody brutality of Savinien's life. Jennifer's privatised pain, mirrored in Savinien's physical violence, metaphorically re-registers her into the social sphere.

Exposure to Savinien's eloquent satiric speech on politics becomes a catalyst for Jennifer to divorce from her *silent violence* and to develop her 'tone'. As 'something midway between slight catarrh and a Polish accent', this tone is 'an unnecessary colour

in the voice, an air of negative comment' (218). Kennedy notes that 'in Scotland, we embrace the negative' and that 'we are trying to teach ourselves the bitterness of life'.⁶⁶ Remaining numb to the pain induced from violence is particularly true of *So I am Glad* which directly addresses a culture of anaesthesia that seeks to deny the existence of pain through drugs and sado-masochistic violence. With a constant sense of guilt, Jennifer depicts that 'Guilt is of course not an emotion in the Celtic countries, it is simply a way of life - a kind of gleefully painful anaesthetic' (36). Embracing negative aspects as an intrinsically subversive way of curing *pain* becomes Jennifer's potential to elicit an empathic response by her internal Other. This voluntary suffering echoes what Kristeva calls *jouissance*, *pleasure* which contains a radical potential.

Kristeva discusses the possibility of salvation by opening to the Otherness as a possible representation of maternity:

Man overcomes the unthinkable of death by postulating maternal love in its place - in the place and stead of death and thought. This love . . . psychologically is perhaps a recall . . . of the primal shelter that insured the survival of the newborn.⁶⁷

Kristeva, taking Oedipus as an illustration, discusses the male subject's abjection of the maternal for fear of losing his subjectivity. Jennifer's abjection of the maternal body for the fear of being subjugated in the patriarchal society, of losing her subjectivity, is the reverse of this. Kristeva's ethics calls for a subjectivity via the symbolic without fighting off the semiotic (the maternal). According to Kristeva, the semiotic is nature while the symbolic is culture; the semiotic is the realm of woman's *jouissance*, a realm that is counterposed to the realm that strives to suppress the powers of horror. By heeding the experience of maternity, a subject would not be anchored by horror within the dualisms of culture/nature but instead utilises the

⁶⁶ Kennedy, A. L. 'A blend of self-denial and lurid pleasure'. *New York Times*, 20 July 1996. Reprinted by and cited from *The Scotsman*, 13 August 1996.

⁶⁷ Kristeva, Julia. *Tales of Love*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 252.

powers of horror to merge itself into the maternal as a rebirth. Here we think of Jennifer playing the role of mother, nursing Savinien to health but simultaneously healing herself in the process. By taking his pain as hers, she no longer takes delight in 'a small still life that fit[s] very snugly around nobody but me':

I used to be secretly happy because my relative youth meant that I would most likely outlive all but the most lunatic regime. Now I know I will have to survive in whatever carelessness, plans and theories I never agreed with have done to my air, my water, my soil, my food. Sorry to go on, but I found that I cared about these things. Someone I loved was living here and I care about them. (220).

Undertaking pain of her own and of others tears down Jennifer's small world; pain paradoxically disunites her painful life and restores her humanity by re-embodiment it.

Cristie L. March indicates that for Kennedy, gender is not a barrier and often 'occupies a de-prioritised place'.⁶⁸ Resolving the gender trauma, in Jennifer's case, rests on a love that is not simply for her internal Other but for what was once in her, for the singular Other and for the universal. Pain serves not merely as a personal painkiller but also as a universal love invoker. Jennifer develops a love for both her wounds and Savinien's, pondering that they may 'get another garden from the bare ground up' as long as they spade 'a pattern into the levelled earth' (205). She hopes that their garden of love will be a 'Paradise Garden', like the Garden of Adam and Eve, blessed with the singing of birds (215) and a harmonious relationship even though their love is sinful. Jennifer, nevertheless, is cynical about the stability of this harmonious relationship. She starts to wonder why women build out 'their states of mind in tiny stones' (225). She wants her mental state 'free from blame' (225) and free from being threatened 'by a stranger' (225), by her internal Other. In order to defy her stranger, her foreigner, her Other within, Jennifer must engage herself into a 'feverish

⁶⁸ March indicates that Kennedy deals with gender issues in the troubled family structure as a whole, focusing on the interconnections among characters. March, Cristie L. *Rewriting Scotland*. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 138.

chill of journey' with Savinien to confront her 'fear of falling' (253), her fear of being forsaken, and of being alone. On the one hand, the reader is invited to go on a trip with Jennifer's 'foreigner' to visit threatening, exotic, as Kristeva suggests, 'other climes, mentalities, and governments'.⁶⁹ On the other hand, in Kristeva's view, 'this move is undertaken only to return to oneself and one's home, to judge or laugh at one's limitations, peculiarities, mental and political despotisms'.⁷⁰ Kristeva implies that it is only through recognising the individual sense of alterity that a broader sense of universality can be conceived.

Tennant's and Kennedy's characters can be considered within the rubric of 'castrated women', socially castrated in their sexuality and psychologically castrated in their gender identity. These authors concentrate on the role of women who are socially marginalised and sexually exploited by patriarchal society and who are made to serve to uphold the masculine mode of the feminine. Gender trauma makes their characters detest the feminine that is socially defined in corporeal conformation, modesty, and propriety. It therefore causes them to hate being imprisoned in the female body.

Tennant and Kennedy on the whole inscribe gender trauma as their characters' disease of the soul. The corporeal conformity of the female body to the male's desire makes the protagonists suffer from the abject--self-hatred for being imprisoned in the female body and the consequent radical estrangement from themselves. This abject posits the socially defined feminine as 'the grotesque', both the stranger and the familiar, the part unpleasant but unshakable to confront.

The appearances of the supernatural mediator, the spectral and uncanny figure, in Tennant's and Kennedy's novels all present cognate solutions of the grotesque in terms of the incoherent pathos. These spectral figures appear as the abject's projection

⁶⁹ Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. Trans. Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia UP, 1993), p. 133.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

of the gothic heroines' mental state--the gothic heroines' borders of self. Haunting the female characters at the periphery of their consciousness, these supernatural mediators serve as a catalyst for the protagonists to liberate themselves through psychological transformation. Their characters commonly undergo a crucial stage in their moral and psychic development by suspending the social projection of stereotypes onto women and obliterating their self-hatred. The protagonists' encounter with the uncanny, the spectral, and the supernatural mediator renders them the *pleasure* of emancipation from their long-term suppressed *pain*. This *pleasure* of emancipation derives from the *terror* of being hurt and the *pain* of confronting the abject. Only through the heroines' confrontation with these uncanny figures that sustain but threaten their subjectivity can they recognise the falsehood of the border of this gender identity which afflicts them.

Conclusion

Tennant's and Kennedy's characters, corresponding to the psychological perspectives of the grotesque, implicitly conceal the female aversion to the feminine. The ethical norms implied in the culture of two sexes in modern society uphold the standards of the powerful and the 'strong'—characterised as the 'masculine'—and relatively devalue the feminine in relation to it.⁷¹ This devaluation of the feminine causes a negative psychological effect: abjection. This abjection stems from gender trauma; it resists the corporeal conformation of the female body, repels the masculine mode of the feminine, generates self-hatred for being imprisoned in the body, and

⁷¹ Butler stresses that 'a certain "girling" is compelled' through the symbolic power which 'governs the formation of a corporeality enacted femininity that never fully approximates the norm'. Femininity is thus 'indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment'. See Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 232.

therefore causes a radical peculiarity to itself. This abjection establishes a desired subjectivity for the female characters to expel what they are not, and what is deemed Other to themselves. This subjectivity, however, is precarious; what they repel—the maternal—is inherent in themselves and cannot be banished altogether. The repelled Other within themselves thus becomes unfamiliar or, more often, becomes uncannily too familiar: unfamiliar because of the intentional exclusion of the symbolic threats of this Other, and familiar because of the conscious awareness of this Other's uncanny hovering.

Both Tennant and Kennedy set their narratives in late twentieth-century culture. Their choices of time and place are very different but their use of particular historical moments suggests that they are addressing the effects of Scottish tradition within their current era. In order to vent women's restrained fury on the markings of their internalised Other, they satirise the alter ego which appears in the form of a supernatural spectre, and characterise particular historical settings. Their use of the Gothic tradition (the terrifying ambivalence towards sexual morality) in ironic relation to man as a subject differentiates their view from that of their Scottish contemporaries. Elspeth Barker, for instance, uses the split Gothic self to consider ideological oppressions in gendered relationships, while Alice Thompson uses bizarre, half-inhuman Gothic figures to reflect upon the male obsession with female beauty. I will discuss these other authorial techniques in the following chapters.

Chapter Two

The Horrifying Other: Ghosts

Where was I going? My new body seemed to know.
 I was walking fast, but smooth and controlled . . . for
 the High Street . . . where I lived looked already like a
 ruin excavated a hundred years ago: as if the houses had
 been built with their deformities, crazed pipes, broken
 roofings, ghastly follies in the worst of Victorian taste.

-- *The Bad Sister*, 38

Carol Ann Howells in *Love, Mystery, and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction* discusses the disconnected affectivity of Gothic texts, indicating that contemporary writers 'tend to concentrate on external details of emotional display while leaving readers to deduce for themselves complex inner psychological movements'.¹ That is, the violence of characters' emotional expression is displayed but, at the same time, the authors take a critical distance from this expression, withholding sympathy from their characters. Like postmodern fiction, then, the Gothic challenges the limits of the Gothic form. The Gothic narratives explored in the last chapter exemplify this challenge: they foreground a descriptive subjectivity in text and reader, while subverting the interpretative structure that controls reality and directs affectivity. The first chapter dealt with the fictional depiction of the unsettling female subjectivity suffering from its abjection of femininity. This chapter then demonstrates the authors' *complicity* in their representation of the dilemma of a subject's autonomy; that is, their ideological critique of this representation. As Heidi Hansson comments on postmodern romance, 'the common core of feminism can be supported at the same

¹ Howells, C. A. *Love, Mystery, and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction*. (London: Athlone Press, 1978), p. 15.

time as certain feminist views are criticised'.² This ambiguity functions to reformulate the fragments of Gothic tradition in a revolutionary way that involves both inheriting and renouncing. This potential politics of postmodern representation,³ as postulated by Linda Hutcheon (theorising upon the relationship between postmodernism and intertextual theory and practice), foregrounds my motive to connect the motif of abjection as discussed in chapter one and the narrative irony of this abjection through the critique of intertextuality in this chapter.

If one wonders whether our craving for narrative suggests a need for escape from reality and for the wish-fulfillment of ontology, the texts of Tennant and Kennedy paradoxically support but also decry this wonders. The fictional narrators in their diaries eschew the truth of their mentality, articulate their 'reality' and posit a specific ontology to their readers; however, their self-moulding narratives signal an authorial attempt to unveil objective reality and to falsify individualised ontology. The fictional narrators confirm one aspect of our lives that we cannot dismiss; nevertheless, what the narrators believe consciously is not what all readers believe. The narrators undermine the credibility of narrative. In *Desire in Language*, Kristeva argues that the conception of the subject as a matter is the product of a particular culture, and linguistic constellation, and that the posture of this mastery cannot be maintained.⁴ Since the fictional female subjects have not come to terms with their internal strangeness, they project strangeness onto men, onto their opposed subjects, and ultimately onto their cultures. An interrogation of the ideology of subjugated women collapses not only the victimiser/victimised dichotomy, but also the presumed contrast between the narrative representation of repression and the cultural

² Hansson, Heidi. *Romance Revived: Postmodern Romances and the Tradition*. (Sweden: Swedish Science Press, 1998), p. 28.

³ See Hutcheon, Linda. 'Intertextuality, parody, and the discourses of history'. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. (London: Routledge, 1989 Repr.), pp. 124-140.

⁴ Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language*. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez. Ed.

counter-representation of this repression via Gothic terror. In other words, the cultural counter-representation of repression as expressed by the Gothic mode is still anchored within the limits of the Gothic form: the terrifying figure remains a converse of an opposing, one-sided polarity. The use of literary language here resists the cultural counter-representation of repression and provides readers with an alternative entry into a new version of Gothic subversion and with an anti-representation (irony) of reality. These Gothic narratives postulate the anti-representation of reality in order to foreground a radical but invincible revolt. These Gothic narratives ultimately aim to deconstruct the ontology of the *cultural* self.

We may take Hansson's definition of cultural intertextuality as a concise illustration of the deconstruction of the ontology of the cultural self. Hansson defines cultural intertextuality as a literary work that has a dialogic relationship with the world it describes (history) and with the world in which it was produced (society).⁵ Hansson emphasises historical narratives that have influenced our culture, but focuses upon the very examination that the dialogue interrogates. Hansson notes the importance of textual allusions when it comes to particular historical and social ideologies. Nevertheless, her indication of the textual references to currents in marked history and society does not elucidate how the role of language functions in the post-structuralist deconstruction of a produced reality. I propose that the performance of Hansson's cultural *intertextuality* is linguistically fulfilled through a split movement of intertext as postulated by Kristeva: by the *phenotext* and the *genotext*. Kristeva's former term demonstrates definable structures and presents the voice of a single, unified subject, whereas the latter reflects the 'drive energy' of this self-unified subject in terms of its 'phonematic devices' such as rhythm, intonation, repetition and

Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 165.

⁵ Hansson, Heidi. *Romance Revived: Postmodern Romances and the Tradition*. (Sweden: Swedish Science Press, 1998), p. 27.

various kinds of narrative arrangement.⁶ Kristeva's two intertextual operations effectively consolidate Hansson's idea of cultural intertextuality. Before analysing the anti-representation of reality using the linguistic strategy employed in the chosen texts, I would like to specify the reasons why the internal Other can be culturally communicated according to Hansson and can be intertextually satirised according to Kristeva, and why this performance of cultural intertextuality foregrounds the internal Other as a medium of postmodern parody in these chosen texts.

As discussed in the first chapter, Tennant's and Kennedy's female protagonists suffer from an internal Other which hovers over and haunts their consciousness until they are forced to confront the source of their mental distress. This 'Other within' stems, on an individual level, from fixed gendered relationships in each character's family background but stems on a more universal level, from various cultural settings. In the first section (2.1) of this chapter, I intend to examine the fictional response to this internal Other as crafted by the satire of textual doubleness that is presented by historical particularities. I will make the claim that the relative positions in modern culture opposing these historical particularities also risk being subsumed. In the second section (2.2), I will explain why Kristeva's view of split movement of textuality contributes to a linguistic analysis of textual doubleness in the chosen literary texts. In the third section (2.3), I will explore how Tennant and Kennedy respond to the internal Other in their satirisations of the double uncanny, especially when Otherness is punctuated by particular historical settings. In the 'phenotext', Tennant satirises, in terms of gender repression, the role of demon in the double uncanny fabricated by Hogg and Stevenson in their nineteenth century texts. She attempts to replace the realm of the personal demonic impulse with the realm of

⁶ Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. Intro. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 86-87.

gendered demonic destruction. Kennedy parodies the doubly uncanny, in terms of gender relationship, portrayed as a seventeenth century spectre. She intends to release her fury towards the unspoken promise of the violent sado-masochistic treatment in gender relationship via the political anger consumed by a historical legendary figure. I will demonstrate how the internal Other is distinctively and culturally forged through satire. In the fourth section (2.4), I will continue to discuss the 'genotext' and the way these two authors weave together threads of irony in order to acknowledge that their characters are inevitably separated from the past by both time and the cultural representation of women. However, they also show readers that such cultural backdrops also induce an ironic but radical difference in the cultural continuum, one that permits no resolution but only greater contradiction. I will examine how the two authors display, in the 'genotext', a hostile self that underlies this radical difference. This self is inevitably enmeshed into another *signifying system* of meaning and value: in this case, a system of misogyny.

My argument for this chapter is that the two authors search for texts through intertextual practices, going beyond available codes and systems of the already written and already read. They remain attached to the rhetoric of textual liberation and detached from any human intention as it is connected to a residual subjectivity. The object of this chapter is to demonstrate the structural impact (in terms of cultural intertextuality) which will reform the typical Gothic *doubling* with linguistic play and that will incorporate an ironic tone that shapes the surface: stylistic doubleness, a parody.

2.1 *Narrative Persona of Textual Doubleness*

In the beginning of *Illness and Metaphor*, Susan Sontag articulates her inquiry

into the use of illness as metaphor. She indicates that illness itself does not undermine life but that the lurid 'metaphoric thinking'⁷ of illness mystifies and subsequently aggravates the disease. It is, therefore, through the elucidation of such metaphors that the conception of disease becomes rectified. If we view the illness more psychologically than physically, we may say that the illness of abjection of the feminine (resulting from the outward feminine oppression in those literary texts explored in the last chapter) must be de-mythicised through an investigation into the inward 'metaphoric thinking' of this oppression. Tennant's and Kennedy's texts refuse simple readings of the female characters' illnesses and intend to *defer* the textual meanings that indicate the 'metaphoric thinking' of this gender trauma. Anderson and Christianson notably draw attention to the recurring feature of uncertainty in the narrative strategies employed by modern Scottish women writers, suggesting that they are 'often [deconstruct] . . . dominant ideologies'.⁸ Dealing with issues related to the construction of social and psychic identity, Scottish women writers of the last century work with an indeterminable Otherness that applauds the 'breaking down of boundaries, loosening distinct outlines, merging the individual with collective, and exploring the ambiguity of identity at the interface of subject and object'.⁹ An awareness of the 'borderline' types of identity between the culture and the self underlies Tennant's and Kennedy's ultimate irony of the constraining effects of patriarchal society as it encloses women.

⁷ Susan Sontag compares illness to the night-side of life, in a broader sense, the negative side of the dual citizenship in the kingdom both of the well and of the sick. She argues that illness is *not* a metaphor and that 'the healthiest way of being ill is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric associations with the illness. In the case of nation, she notes that though it is hard for us, living in the kingdom of the ill, to be 'unprejudiced by the metaphors with which it has been landscaped', we still have to be uninterested towards the 'sentimental fantasies concocted about' the 'stereotypes of national character'. See Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*. (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1991), p. 3.

⁸ Anderson, Carol and Aileen Christianson, eds. 'Introduction'. *Scottish Women's Fiction, 1920s to 1960s: Journeys into Being*. (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press Ltd, 2000), pp. 7-19 (16).

⁹ Quotation comes from Patricia Waugh in *Feminine Fictions*. pp. 80-81. Cited in Anderson, Carol and Aileen Christianson eds. 'Introduction'. *Scottish Women's Fiction, 1920s to 1960s: Journeys into Being*.

Elphinstone suggests that the Scottish tradition is particularly characterised by its use of *personae*, 'of narrators or subjects who expose themselves and their limitations through ironic self-revelation'.¹⁰ Telling a different story from the overt narratives, Tennant and Kennedy open up the issue of how social assumptions about gender and sexuality dictate a picture of the Scottish world. They inscribe a repressed Other as it exists in women's minds and then expose the limitation of the effects of that Other through a character's ironic self-revelation. Tennant inscribes gender anger with a terrifying examination of sin in the 1970s (*The Bad Sister*) and 1980s (*Two Women of London*), respectively set in the Scottish borders and West London. Kennedy elaborates on gender violence by referring to a widespread anaesthesia that denies the existence of violence by addiction to greater violence, such as alcohol, drugs, and pornography, in the 1990s (*So I am Glad*) environment of Glasgow. Both authors set their claustrophobic investigations into the collective formation of the internal Other, by making allusions to earlier cultural currents. Tennant mocks the spectral demon existing in gender exploitation in the Scottish Borders of the twentieth century and West London by parodying the nineteenth-century inscription of the personal demonic impulse presented in Hogg's and Stevenson's works. In contrast, Kennedy flaunts the psychic demon disrupting gender relationships in the urban life of twentieth-century Glasgow by satirising the seventeenth-century depiction of political brutality as uttered by a male narcissist. Both authors require their readers to suspend trust in the character's narration so that readers may discern the reality that constructs the narrators: their mental violence.

In order to investigate the transformation of the doubleness of the uncanny

(Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press Ltd, 2000), pp. 7-19 (16).

¹⁰ Elphinstone, Margaret. 'The Quest: Two Contemporary Adventures'. *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature*. Ed. Christopher Whyte. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp. 107-136 (109).

into the doubleness of narration, we must return to Freud's view of 'the return of the repressed' and its relation to literature. The subject's encounter with its hidden Other, according to Freud, marks in literature the doubly uncanny.¹¹ Freud indicates:

The fact . . . that man is capable of self-observation--renders it possible to invest the old idea of a 'double' with a new meaning and to ascribe a number of things to it--above all, those things which seem to self-criticism to belong to the old surmounted narcissism of earliest times.¹²

Although Freud discusses this when in a commentary on Hoffmann's 'The Sandman', his argument also applies to the female protagonists that I examined in the previous chapter. Each encounter by a female protagonists with her hidden Other (epitomised by the spectral) threatens the present by its very existence: the hidden Other is each woman's past repeated. Their hidden Other is nothing more than the internal reality of a life lived according to the desire of men. Their casual acceptance of this Other's existence, rather than their constant resistance to it, implies that there is nothing particularly strange about its deviant presence. There is an air of inevitability about this Other's return as it is echoed in Freud's notion of repetition. Freud notes that 'this factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds what would otherwise be innocent enough with an uncanny atmosphere . . . [it] forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable'.¹³ The literary configuration of the uncanny (of facing the double) is, for Freud, nothing more than the configuration of the past repeated. To inscribe those feelings generated by an encounter with the double, therefore, means to trace the feelings towards this double as they were generated in relation to the subject

¹¹ Freud notes that literature 'is a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole of the latter and something more besides . . . that cannot be found in the real life'. This 'something more besides' is the fantastic self-dialogue in Freud's reference to Hoffmann's work. Freud, Sigmund. 'The Uncanny' (1919) in *Art and Literature: Jensen's Gradiva, Leonardo Da Vinci and Other Works*. Ed. A. Dickson. Trans. J. Strachey. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 339-376 (372).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 357.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 359-360.

in the past.

This investigation into the past, according to Freud, reveals transference, a key tool for psychoanalysis. According to Thurschwell, patients perform childhood emotions through their relationships with an analyst, not initially realising that they are imitating old patterns of their relationship to the 'original figures who inspired those feelings (often their parents)'.¹⁴ Each of the patient's motives, including hostile ones, are detected, brought into consciousness, and then subsequently destroyed. Through the analysis of transference, the transposition is exposed. Transposition, a Freudian term, is further developed by Kristeva to suggest the condition of the subject, one 'split between the conscious and the unconscious, reason and desire, the rational and the irrational, the social and the presocial, the communicable and the incommunicable'.¹⁵ This bifurcated condition is echoed in the literary tension between the protagonist's compromising desire for a social self and her relentless resistance to that social self. The 'condensation' of the social self and the 'displacement'¹⁶ of this social self, form two operations in the semiotic process in literary texts. Intertextuality, a term coined by Kristeva, consists of these two operations in any one literary text—a dialogue in both diachronic and synchronic terms.¹⁷ Kristeva illuminates, however, not only the way texts echo each other but also to the way that discourses are transposed into one another so that meanings in

¹⁴ Thurschwell, Pamela. *Sigmund Freud*. Routledge Critical Thinkers: essential guides for literary studies. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 39.

¹⁵ Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality*. The New Critical Idiom. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 47.

¹⁶ Freud, in his analysis of dreams, argues that dreams tend to function through *condensation* and *displacement*. In condensation, one sign collects a host of meanings or signifiers into itself; in displacement, a sign from another area of signification stands in for the real content of the dream. A scream in a dream, for example, might symbolically condense ideas and desires concerning a host of aspects of life: murder, religious ritual, sexual desire, financial instability. A surreal dream centering on an apple might be a symbolically displaced working-through of the dreamer's desires for a person associated in the unconscious with apples. See Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (1953-74). Trans. James Strachey. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1900), pp. 4-5.

¹⁷ Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. Intro. Leon S. Roudiez.

one discourse overlap with meanings from another discourse. A new articulation that ultimately distances itself from these layers of meanings is implicit within the semiotic process.

2.2 *Split Movement of Textuality*

We may also ask: what is the relation between intertextuality and Kristeva's description of the subject as split between the symbolic and the pre-symbolic fields? The answer seems to be that the texts display the same split movement between the logical and alogical, between the symbolic and pre-symbolic forces. In order to mark the split movement of texts, Kristeva uses two terms: the *phenotext* and the *genotext*. The 'phenotext' is that part of the text bound up with the language of communication, the 'thetic-thesis'.¹⁸ The 'genotext' is that part of the text which comes from the 'drive energy' emanating from the unconscious and which is discernible in terms of various kinds of narrative arrangements.¹⁹ Roudiez illuminates Kristeva's view that a text can be woven from 'threads within the semiotic disposition' (genotext) but also from threads 'that issue from societal, cultural, syntactical, and other grammatical constraints' (phenotext).²⁰ Namely, the 'genotext' ruptures and disturbs the 'phenotext', articulating the drives of a pre-symbolic subjectivity. This pre-symbolic subjectivity, though it does not possess a language, uses the languages of the symbolic order (thetic language) in order to be understood. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva conceives of intertextuality as 'the passage from one sign system to another' that involves 'an altering of the thetic *position*--the destruction of the old position and

(New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 59-60.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

the formation of the new one'.²¹ This formation of a new articulation, outwardly appropriating the old sign system but inwardly renouncing that sign system, fundamentally seeks the pre-symbolic subject, the subject of drives rather than of thetic language. What Kristeva's approach concerns then is not the 'sense' or 'signification' of language but with what she calls '*signifiance*', the *manner* in which the text 'signif[ies] what representative and communicative speech does not say'.²² What the speech does not say is present in the *manner* that constructs the speech. Thus, intertextuality aims ostensibly and ultimately towards nothing more than foregrounding the radical fact that no text is purely semiotic; the semiotic cannot be made as a discourse but relatively manifests itself in the symbolic.

From this perspective, the authorial target is not intended merely to satirise other texts through language (the symbolic order) but ultimately to reflexively underpin the manner of this linguistic satire (the subject's drives to the semiotic). Since the semiotic cannot be purely expressed, the 'double-voiced'²³ utterance is intricately landscaped onto literary texts. The manner of linguistic satire is plausibly embedded in broader social and cultural contexts. In her essay 'The Bounded Text', Kristeva suggests that a text is composed of what is styled 'the cultural (or social) text', a text as 'a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text', in which 'several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralise one

²¹ Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. Intro. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 59.

²² Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: a semiotic approach to literature and art*. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 18.

²³ It is a term coined by Bakhtin and highlighted by Kristeva into her new term, *intertextuality*. In her essays, 'The Bounded Text' (1980: 36-63), Kristeva introduces the work of Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel'. Bakhtin claims that the language in the novel is 'heteroglot' and 'represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past'. The *heteroglossia* of language reveals the clash of ideologies. In the polyphonic novel, for instance, the speech of characters is always heteroglot, double-voiced. As Bakhtin notes: 'It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions'. Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl

another'.²⁴ These manners of speaking are institutionally sanctioned structures and form what we call culture. The literary text, in this sense, is not an individual product but rather an assemblage collectively produced by cultural textuality. Authors do not create original works out of their own thoughts but rather produce them from a pre-existing text deriving from a collective, cultural context. In other words, it is this intention of collective cultural context that authors, in a reflexive examination of the manner of linguistic satire, *ultimately* try to self-mock and destroy.

This radical liberation of signification is precisely the spirit extolled by poststructuralists. In the culture of late capitalism, a play of images without any attachment to cultural norm or social class, marks what Roland Barthes calls the 'death of the author'. As Barthes writes:

'Significance', unlike signification, cannot be reduced to communication, to representation, to expression: it puts the (writing or reading) subject into the text, not as a projection, not even as a fantasmatic one . . . but as a 'loss'.²⁵

The authorial subject is a 'loss' in the text in the sense that the writing subject is not characterised by its individual self, but by the culturally *signifying systems* within which it speaks. The origin of the text is not a unified authorial consciousness but rather a plurality of cultural texts and utterances. The writing subject ultimately questions available modes of representation in culture while realising that it must still put those modes into practice. This self-conscious double-codedness in parody is recognised by Linda Hutcheon as the paradox of postmodern literature:

Parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some sense, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies. It also forces a reconsideration of the idea of origin or originality that is compatible with

Emerson and Michael Holquist. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 324.

²⁴ Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: a semiotic approach to literature and art*. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 36.

²⁵ Barthes, Roland. 'Theory of the Text'. *Untying the Text: a post-structuralist reader*. Ed. Robert Young. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 31-47(38).

other postmodern interrogations of liberal humanist assumptions.²⁶

The postmodern use of codes and forms from the past foregrounds the politics of representation. It not only shows how contemporary novels intertextually 'incorporate' codes, forms and references to historically diverse texts, but also demonstrates the *manner* in which history as an 'idea of origin' is presented in each novel's double-coded questioning of available forms of representation. In other words, postmodern literature favours the ex-centric, the off-centre, and the refusal of any attachment to cultural forms, both of the past and of the present. Intertextuality 'ineluctably identifie[s] with the centre [both of the present and of the past] it desires'²⁷—even at the same time as it denies this centre.

This refracted intention to avow a centered narration aims to unravel numerous signifying systems and to produce what we may call a rebellious self as against its Other within the text. On the one hand, the explicit intention of the text we are reading attempts to transpose complex signifying systems into a communicable and logical structure: in this part of textuality, the 'phenotext' predominates. On the other hand, the implicit intention of textuality transposes these signifying systems into the *manner* of textual practice and unleashes a rebellious self to its Other in relation to these systems in the 'genotext'. This defiant self, in psychoanalysis, forms in opposition to the particular system it aims to codify. This self, while resisting the symbolic order and attracting the drive towards the semiotic is not, after all, purely semiotic; it may become another *signifying system*, another symbolic order. It is this revolting order that postmodern literary texts *ultimately* intend to resist and disrupt.

²⁶ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: history, theory, fiction*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p. 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60. Hutcheon cites Derrida's contention that 'center is a function, not a being--a reality'. She consolidates this function while mentioning the 'contestings of narrative centering' in Angela Carter's *Night at the Circus*. She explains that this function 'straddles the border between . . . the realistic / historical' and paradoxically generates a 'decentered narration, with its wandering point of view and extensive digressions'. See, pp. 60-65.

The poststructuralist insistence on the loss of access to reality technically installs the critique of irony about reality.

2.3 *Defying the Cultural Other*

Both Tennant and Kennedy set their narratives in twentieth-century culture. Their choices of time and place are very different but their use of particular historical moments suggests that they are addressing the effects of Scottish tradition within the current era. In order to express a woman's restrained fury towards the makings of her internalised Other, they satirise the doubly uncanny which appears in the form of supernatural spectres and which characterises particular historical settings. Their use of the Gothic tradition (the terrifying ambivalence towards morality) in ironic relation to man provides an alternative to the more traditional views of their Scottish contemporaries.

Martin C. Wesley suggests that ghosts are more a 'sign of participation in the genre of imaginative literature' than the supernatural and that it is 'not ghosts that invent stories but stories that introduce ghosts, define them, and tell what tales can be told about them'.²⁸ By this definition, Emma Tennant's *The Bad Sister* (1978) and *Two Women of London* (1989) consist of elaborate ghost stories: they are haunted by the influential ghosts of other stories. Tennant's texts are shaped by the ghosts of earlier male texts and are affected by the changes inherent in such a shaping. With the burlesques of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Tennant arranges imitative plots to articulate the psychological doubling

²⁸ Wesley, Marilyn C. 'Emma Tennant: The Secret Lives of Girls'. *British Women Writing Fiction*. Ed. Abby H. P. Werlock. Foreword by Regina Barreca. (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 2000), pp. 175-190 (176).

of women rather than of men, and concerns herself with the psychological connection between the good side of a self and its split demonic ego.

The Bad Sister reveals a kinship with Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* by managing to present different explanations for demonic murders. Wesley suggests that Tennant's readers generally endorse her ability to fabricate the terms of the 'quintessential female space'²⁹ between the familial paternity and the enigmatic appeal to the diabolic power. By satirising the devil's trapping of a human soul in Hogg's work, Tennant treats the supernatural as the epitome of a female protagonist's fury toward her internal Other. In the opening of *The Bad Sister*, similar to the narrative device employed by Hogg, Tennant forestalls critics by including an Editor to represent the 'rational' viewpoint, who is trying to find evidence of the bloody murders of Michael Dalzell (Jane's father) and Ishbel (Jane's half-sister). The fact that this male Editor can never explain the parts of the story he finds incredible deflects the arguments of a critical reader while retaining the mystery of the murder caused by the maternal vital power. Robert Wringhim, according to the Editor in Hogg's work, kills George out of pride over his 'second self' or 'brother' and justifies himself for the murder using a religious vindication of Calvinist *predestination* (he is chosen by God for salvation regardless of any mistake he makes). Jane's justification, in contrast with Wringhim's male sense of superiority over his twin, seems motivated by her abandoned state (her father abandons her at birth) and her illegitimacy (emphasised by her half-sister's contempt). The female fury against paternal abuse underlies Jane's divided self and perhaps explains her devotion to diabolic activities. Gil-Martin, the spectral being summoned by Meg, is nothing more than the manifestation of Jane's internal desires. Jane seeks masculine diabolical

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 179. Wesley suggests that this space is often figuratively described in the house, which Tennant equates with the mother figure and which characterises the female protagonist's experience in her childhood.

powers—as reflected through the bloody murders—in order to avenge herself upon those who imposed such unfairness on her sex.

Paradoxically, the *Memoir*, while revealing Jane's crimes, also allows the reader to sympathise with her longing to destroy both her internal Other and herself. As we go progress with Jane's confessions, we understand that her internal Other, though initially generated by an aversion towards her mother's subservience to her father, also takes deeper roots in her distaste for Ishbel's familial blessing as a socially adherent girl. Jane shares a similar familial background to Hogg's Rabina Colwan's (although they are not exactly the same) in that Jane was rejected as a child and expected to have little character of her own. Like Rabina Colwan, Jane appears cold and straight-laced in the wedding description. Her sole pleasure is in conducting arguments about diabolical powers, and her only emotion is one of jealousy when Miranda takes her place in love (as Rabina does to Arabella Logan, *Confessions*, 42). However, unlike Rabina who shows some moral for Robert's well-being in moral or religious terms, Jane shows her anxiety to Miranda with immoral pleasure, stating: 'What a disappointment for her that I should come instead!' (*The Bad Sister*, 158). Pleased that her 'terrible absence' (158) is a deadening power, Jane takes pride in her 'non-existence' (158) as a validation of her life's dignity. Her hallucinating imagination paradoxically vindicates her existence. By not objectifying the supernatural demonic entity, Tennant provides a realisation that internal evil can indeed pervade the world: symptoms of schizophrenia (recurring opposite the internal Other) are enough to produce more intriguing ways of calling up the devil than by direct invocation. Jane's vision therefore fuses the natural and the diabolical in a way that communicates a sense not merely of the creepy and unnatural, but also of the supernatural in its fullest sense.

Kristeva claims that the foundation of the symbolic is the imaginary realm of

signification with its accompanying semiotic modes of signification.³⁰ The stronger the imaginary realm becomes, the more one is able to engage in symbolic communication. In other words, the unusual psychological intensity of narratives is precisely the expressive form of Jane's passionate obsession with the demonic revenge. Witchcraft with supernatural power becomes more attractive to Jane as is demonstrated by her frequent visits to Meg's 'women's house'. In the house, the twist of hair at Meg's hands, which 'lay inert and brown as a long-dead caterpillar between the minuscule panes of glass' (98), reminds Jane of 'a woman struck by thunder three centuries ago' (98). The historical image of a repressed woman initiates Jane's demonic pilgrimage in a way of symbolic crucifix. She longs to destroy the subjugated Other within herself by fighting with the paternal authority, even at the price of self's destruction. Meg, who is a witch-like figure in *The Bad Sister*, parallels Gil-Martin in Hogg's work. Although Gil-Martin holds the magical power that Robert aspires to, it is also Gil-Martin's position that Robert wants to bring down in his devious plan. In contrast to Robert's desires for power and fame, Jane desires nothing more than the destruction of power and fame. She murders Michael Dalzell (a successful politician), Ishbel (an obedient girl with a solid family background), Miranda (an ideal wife endorsed in the wedding party), and finally herself (with diabolically destructive power). Jane has already deciphered the riddles within a series of murders through her act of suicide. She intends to destroy the devil in herself.

Given that societies simultaneously inflict terrible injuries upon themselves and then develop ways of healing those injuries, the most severe method of healing is (paradoxically) through destruction rather than reconstruction. The Gothic provides self-healing through terror, namely, through reinforcing thoughts that have been

³⁰ Kristeva, Julia. *New Maladies of the Soul*. Trans. Ross Guberman. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 104.

repressed within the unconscious. As Jane confesses, 'Waiting is painful because it is an eternal present. The past is frozen, the future atrophied' (108). The memory of the Victorian age as a past for Jane is the matrix of 'then' versus 'now', feminine versus masculine, and pleasure versus pain, all of which are fixed into place through an individual's ideology. Reconstruction no longer circumvents historical disturbances and no longer suffices for the complexity of an age's change. Only destruction can nullify the existence of subjects that are contingent upon others. Those women who are indulging in the feminist hedonism of Paradise Island and who are having their 'husbands hanging about outside the home' (159), are articulating their values of life as being contingent upon their male others. As Jane depicts herself as 'unplaceable' (38) to those women entering Paradise Island: her 'new genetic pattern' (38) is about far more than opposing reconstruction of woman's historical image, and therefore seems 'ancient and known' but 'infinitely strange' (38). Only a bloodbath can satiate her impulse for destruction.

Unlike Robert's reliance on the immunity of the elect by God, Jane's dependence on diabolical powers is a gesture that demonstrates her search for religious salvation. Conspiracy in religious debate results in Robert's isolation; conversely, conspiracy in occult murders leads Jane to obliterate her isolation. Robert's isolation also makes him more receptive to Gil-Martin's flattery. Gil-Martin appears as a 'great prince' in his exotic clothing; he stresses Robert's importance to him. Quite differently, unlike Robert's passive seduction, Jane's isolation *spontaneously* calls for Gil-Martin's to invoke redemption: 'In my peace and emptiness, I circle over him' (129). Because Jane takes the initiative in dealing with the demonic, she becomes increasingly convinced that an appeal to the devil is the only way to eradicate her internal Other. Unlike Robert, who begins by longing for demonic company and who ends by fleeing from it, Jane sees the force of the devil as

the only means of securing her perverse pleasure for groveling in blood. In order to destroy her Other, Jane's breakdown is preordained.

Jane ends as a fugitive in the Scottish borders, awaiting doom at the hands of her saviour, Gil-Martin, who welcomes her to sail 'through the deep folds of the hills' to his 'mother's cottage' (160). The final section recounts the gruesome way in which the manuscript reached the Editor's hands; it is exhumed from a suicide's grave. Tennant's novel is thus laid open to the reader in a way that seems a companion to many twentieth-century experiments in open-ended narrative. Tennant shows her readers that the narratives of nineteenth-century culture are influential in defining the elements of the demonic: she weaves them into the equally story-like version of experience in this age. With the ironic re-contextualisation of characters and plots, she employs various spectres of culture in order to explore a feminine preoccupation with family and gender identity.

The irony of a dramatised enactment of schizophrenia similarly recurs in *Two Women of London* and the names of several characters are appropriated from those in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*; Tennant, however, posits the figure of the Devil in terms of gender hypocrisy rather than Victorian hypocrisy.³¹ Like Dr. Henry Jekyll in Stevenson's work, Tennant's Miss Eliza Jekyll appears generally respected and possesses a distinguished beauty. Both characters gradually alienate some of their closest friends because of increasing concerns with the dual nature of mankind. Both characters regard 'the creation of Hyde as an expression of the ability to coast along in a state of moral neutrality'.³² This moral neutrality for Dr. Jekyll, however, constitutes moral irresponsibility: for Miss Jekyll, it constitutes moral

³¹ Cavaliero suggests that Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a satire on Victorian hypocrisy, 'a symbolizing of society's capacity to compartmentalise its behaviour' evident in the exposure of the workings of Jekyll's mind. See Cavaliero, Glen. *The Supernatural and English Fiction*. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 162.

³² *Ibid.*

testimony. Dr. Jekyll is unhappy discussing Hyde and insists that his wishes for Mr. Hyde (that he be the recipient of his property) be honored. Hyde is depicted as the fleshly manifestation of Dr. Jekyll's personality; Dr. Jekyll, in the body of Hyde, feels guilty after committing atrocious acts but cannot keep himself from such demonic acts throughout Stevenson's novel. Dr. Jekyll's moral irresponsibility lies in his appropriation of Hyde's body to exercise his rejected desires. Quite differently, in *Two Women of London*, Mrs Hyde is a spectre; she is not of the 'pure evil' growing in good-natured Jekyll but is instead an 'avenging evil' growing in the economically and sexually exploited Miss Jekyll. Miss Jekyll enjoys a secluded life in the deserted house built upon Hyde's basement. This is followed by a period of imprisonment when she is confined to a haunted house under the authority of her powerful female surrogate. Within her doubly haunted space, her body is trapped while moral testimony is secretly pursued.

Mr. Hyde, in Stevenson's work, viciously murders an apparently kind and distinguished old gentleman, Sir Danvers Carew, a once prominent member of parliament. This murder, conducted by Hyde but through Dr. Jekyll's will, exposes Dr. Jekyll's jealousy of Sir Carew's success. In contrast to Dr. Jekyll's diabolical motive, Mrs. Hyde's slaughter of the rapist redresses the horror of sexual violence that threatens women in her society, symbolically sending 'a white blade of light over the body of the dead man' (*Two Women of London*, 173). It is through this righteousness that Miss Jekyll seeks to redress the balance in her internally repressed Other. During the self-imprisonment of Dr. and Miss Jekyll, only their servants can reveal every footstep and motion associated with their employers. Poole, Dr. Jekyll's chief butler and all-around manager of the house, reports that the man in seclusion is not Dr. Jekyll and that Hyde has complete access to Jekyll's house. In *Two Women of London*, however, Poole cannot understand Miss Jekyll's distressing melancholy though he

hears 'a woman wailing like a banshee' (248). All Poole recalls is a 'siren going off in the blitz' (248) and the 'dreadful old pianola-thing in the back garden' (248). This narrative change underlines Tennant's poignant statement that we can never fully understand psychic trauma through acoustic and visual phenomena. The reader is required to sympathetically understand Miss Jekyll's internal Other as contingent on her childhood development and marriage. This internal Other, although private, cannot be articulated but is commonly shared by the 'middle-class' woman who occasionally assemble in the 'boarding-house-cum-club for women' (178).

More perceptive is Tennant's account of this internal Other as a 'degenerative disease' (254). Such a disease, however, cannot be cured of 'its swiftness and its absoluteness' (255): this mental disease goes far beyond medication. Dr. Crane's misdiagnosis of the disease as 'withdrawal from tranquillisers' (254-5) and her advice regarding a 'healthy diet and early nights' (255), draws on the ironic tone of Dr. Jekyll's drama of science. The medical science in Stevenson's work is powerful: it allows two different entities to occupy one person's body. Having compounded a certain mixture of chemicals and then consumed it, Dr. Jekyll can transform himself at will into an ugly and repugnant 'being' who is capable of performing immoral acts. Afterwards, by drinking the same potion, he can be transformed back into his original body. Even though he is suddenly transformed into Hyde one sunny day at Regent's Park, he can still survive through the medical aid offered by Dr. Lanyon. After a while, however, the original drug is no longer effective in returning Hyde to his original self. This is due to some unfortunate impurity in the original compound. The irony underlines here that the medical science does not work, not because it cannot reach the realm of mentality, but because it cannot find the necessary powder. Dr. Crane's complacency in her 'mental asylum' (251) marks Tennant's deliberate irony at the Victorian obsession with science as a symbolic order. In feminist terms, Tennant seeks

to expose the dubious premises of Dr. Jekyll's phallocentrism. She searches for something anterior to the ideology of scientific dichotomy and anterior to the Logos and the Symbolic Order.

Tennant presents psychological insights that challenge notions of the devil as inherited from Stevenson's work. Foregrounding Jekyll, Stevenson and Tennant both explore a doubling that comes to be symbolic of a world of Victorian inhibition and hypocrisy. While Stevenson is concerned with the idea that every man has a shadow self, Tennant focuses on the shadow doubling that issues from the universal bifurcation of gender identity. While Stevenson's psychological double is emblematic of moral planes in spiritual selves, Tennant's psychological double is suggestive of moral planes in gender-modifying cultural selves. However, Tennant does not ignore traditional moral symbolism. Part of her novel's originality lies in its ability to simultaneously exploit original psychological dualism and to develop a moral analogy based on gender identity. The story's interest no longer depends on the value of a second, evil self, but instead upon the assessment of this second self as growing somewhere between the conscious and the unconscious (between subject and its other) in contemporary Scotland.

Life in twentieth-century Scotland, however, is regionally and socially diverse, and so is its literary expression. The last century's Scottish culture in Kennedy's *So I am Glad* (1995), unlike that of Tennant's mixture of disjointed and contradictory elements, adheres to a re-textualisation of urban Scotland. By uncovering Jennifer's life in twentieth-century Glasgow as contrasted with Savinien's life in seventeenth-century Paris, Kennedy seeks the possibility of creating a Scottish identity that defies the isolationist approach³³ and that figuratively decries gender

³³ Kennedy fictionally comments on the British isolationist approach to Europe, during the administration of the Thatcher government, when Savinien first arrives in Glasgow. 'We are in Europe?' he asks Jennifer. 'That's a matter of opinion', she replies, 'but geographically speaking, yes' (55). See

identity.

Parodying Savinien's appearance as a narcissist proud of his history, Kennedy ironically endorses Jennifer's incensed estrangement from this narcissist with feelings of individual idealism. Readers know that Jennifer's emotional cruelty to Savinien's 'air of a prize fighter' like 'a dancing butcher' (9) is a displaced form of emotional cruelty to herself, to her 'woman thing' and 'disaster' (11). Savinien's initial arrival provokes in Jennifer a terror that is thrilling because the liminal vulnerability that he makes her feel affords an experience of the full extent of her body and its abiding sadistic passions. Assessing his 'muzzling at the emptiness between our faces' tinged with 'a kind of shatter, flaws of light' (17), Jennifer takes pleasure in the 'turning and rising' (17) of terror as the potential power to make intimacy comes through listening to Savinien's self-'enjoyed talking' (18). This symbolic act of *mothering* a demon occurs while Savinien talks 'his world into existence' (68) and when Jennifer has 'little else to do' (68) except to hear him. Jennifer paradoxically relishes his masculine narcissism as it tantalises her with the sado-masochistic *jouissance* of transgressing identity boundaries; she later *physically* performs this *jouissance* to Steven after Savinien leaves her: 'If I do not touch the paper often I hope that when I lift it out and warm it there will always be something about it like the scent of him' (236). Pornographic passion, though transferred to Steven, has profoundly expressed Jennifer's entangled emotions of hatred and love.

Kristeva asserts that the symbolic/linguistic level 'requires that supplementary biological and psychological conditions be met'.³⁴ Jennifer's fascination provides her (in subtle ways) with an ecstatic *jouissance*, with an ability to transcend the biological,

March, Cristie L. 'A. L. Kennedy's introspections'. *Rewriting Scotland*. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 151, and Kennedy, A. L. *So I am Glad*. London: Vintage, 1996.

³⁴ Kristeva, Julia. *New Maladies of the Soul*. Trans. Ross Guberman. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 104.

sexual abuse of her childhood and the psychological confinement that characterises this trauma. Savinien's conceited ability 'to fill the space that any normal man would take as his right' (43) provokes Jennifer's restrained passions in subjugation of her body. This exposure, although causing Jennifer to feel 'choke[d] and drown[d]' with 'fever . . . rising . . . rocking and twirling at the brain' when she is staying with Savinien in her flat (69), empowers her emotionally. Kennedy purposefully appropriates the name of the Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac (a writer devalued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but admired for his 'audacity and adventurous spirit and personality' in the nineteenth century)³⁵ in order to indicate Savinien's literary imagination as it unconsciously forms a foundation of his narcissism.³⁶ Savinien's narcissism reveals an antithesis to Jennifer's imagination as it opposes her internal Other. Kristeva considers that 'the positioning of the subject in language has to do with desire'.³⁷ Imagination here presents contradictory desires in terms of the language used by different speaking beings: for Savinien, it is a desire to establish his sense of self in relation to his other while for Jennifer, it is a desire to eradicate her repressed Other. Kennedy's appropriation of this legendary name involves a satiric purpose. Savinien's and Jennifer's identifications of other/Other give both characters an imaginary sense of self, allowing them to speak in a coherent fashion. It is within this imaginary realm that an 'I' begins to develop due to false identifications.

Jennifer's internal self, however, does not merely reveal her anti-social personality, but also conceals a more profound passion towards the insensibility of

³⁵ Lanius, Edward W. *Cyrano de Bergerac and The Universe of the Imagination*. (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1967), p. 12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24. Laninus comments on Cyrano's work that *Le Pédant joué* creates a comic character (Granger) who 'misuses knowledge, spewing forth irrelevant facts in complicated and meaningless Latinate phrases, and erroneously thinks no woman can resist him'. Such error, Laninus interprets, when unwitting, is Freudian definition of delusion. This comment on Cyrano's work is emblematic of the controversy of Cyrano's features of imagination--narcissistic but adventurous.

³⁷ Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality*. The New Critical Idiom. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 55.

violence. She regards this internal and external violence prevailing in her society with references to Savinien's political world in the seventeenth century. Kennedy comments on Jennifer:

I knew quite early on that there was going to be that scene [sodomasochism] and that was part of her. It's quite difficult to make the scene small, basically, to really show what she's like. I wanted it to be about just how angry she is, but if you are that angry you may well just iron everything out and just not let anything out because it might pull the anger after it. . . . She feels she's more dangerous than he [Savinien] is. . . . he's very mellow, as people who kill people quite often are. The habitual murderers I've met have been very calm people because they kind of know they can go there, so kind of relaxation comes into them.³⁸

Jennifer's habitual calm releases no less violence than Savinien's frequent murders.

Lynne Stark indicates that the novel elaborates the long aftermath of the Second World War through references to the fiftieth anniversary of the Normandy Landing and to the relationship between violence and peace, civility and barbarity.³⁹ The historical irony lies in the fact that Savinien's political world of brutality and vulnerability precisely mirrors Jennifer's 'peaceful' world as it artificially rests on even greater violence and barbarism.

While recalling historical moments and pondering the turmoil that destroyed Britain in the early part of the twentieth century, Jennifer conceives the later part of the twentieth century to be relatively safe though emotionally castrated:

For a month I see and hear nothing but men and women willing to die because they thought it would help towards something good, because it was a sad necessity, and I cannot find it in myself to be anything but bored. . . . And I know that we won the war, we have not been invaded, we have not been shot in our streets, blockaded, bombed. No one seems ever to have made us give up those fought-for things, those odd little old-fashioned things, now seen close to the born again Nazis' hearts and

³⁸ March, Leigh Cristie. "Interview with A. L. Kennedy, Glasgow, March 17, 1999". *Edinburgh Review*. 101 (1999): 99-119. p. 116.

³⁹ Stark, Lynne. *Beyond Skin: The Exposed Body and Modern Scottish Fiction*. Thesis (Ph. D.)

otherwise not heard of at all. The freedom, the decency, the fairness, the public safety, equality, opportunity, peace - they have left us so slowly that even now we cannot see clearly when they first started leaching away. (220)

The devastation of violence has been hovering over civic life in an alternate form of violence: the societal unspoken consent with the greater armed force with 'those fought-for things'. This metamorphosed violence, though appearing qualitatively different to the violence in Savinien's world, remains a similarly accepted feature of political life. 'The appropriate authorities are using Les Halles (again, hard by my birthplace) to make spiked pork of anyone they choose', Savinien states; 'malefactors are elongated and truncated and bled and scoured and diced for the enlightenment of the curious mob' (79). Puzzled by Jennifer's modern world marked by the odd peace, Savinien comments: 'You are defenceless and your world is breaking in half. . . . There is such savagery and darkness and then such ridiculous openness' (228). Jennifer responds: 'We're not open, not defenceless, just apathetic - we really don't care very much' (228). Where Savinien displays peace with self-complacency, Jennifer uses peace to signify a greater violence: emotional bleakness. The resentment towards physical and psychic forms of violence as presented in Savinien's history and in Jennifer's culture respectively, is foregrounded in this political satire.

2.4 *Interrogating the Defying Self*

Hansson defines intertext as any *dialogue between texts*: 'the posterior work perhaps has the preferential right of interpretation - but maintains it only precariously'.⁴⁰ Tennant and Kennedy both make use of male subjects to raise deeper

(Edinburgh: Department of English Literature, 2002), p. 152.

⁴⁰ Hansson, Heidi. *Romance Revived: Postmodern Romances and the Tradition*. (Sweden: Swedish Science Press, 1998), p. 22.

questions of identity for their female protagonists, opening the way for readers to seek answers not only to the mysterious plot, but also to the metaphorical meanings of the events. In order to reach an answer at this level, both authors demand of their readers a psychic shift, an ability to decipher the tones underlying their ironic statements. Tennant demands that we stop asking for historical narrative (which is what the narrators purport to give) and to prepare ourselves for reading myth in the parody of this historical narrative; Kennedy demands that we stop insisting on 'facts' (which is what the narrator suggests that we should do) and that we begin reading the psyche affected by these facts. In other words, both writers demand that readers should go beyond textualities of the Gothic genre, history, and facts, and start to read passions and images as they exist inside the narrator's head.

What deserves our attention, however, is that the young woman's psychological predicament within Tennant's work aims not merely to expose the reader's sympathetic intimacy but also to encourage the reader's insight into the totality of their pathos. Tennant's works, as Wesley acknowledges, 'demonstrate a special regard for her protagonists, a certain kind of engaged attention, not quite pity, but a long way from farce, that has been largely exorcised from more typical postmodern fictions'.⁴¹ Fully determined by a consciousness of terrifying spectral events, *The Bad Sister* and *Two Women of London* craft an underlying blaze opposed to textual fictionality. At first, the reader sees only the protagonists' conscious persona but finally the reader recognises a darker double, the unconscious that is suicidally angry with the family that failed to grant love as was desired. It is this furious speaking subject that Tennant reflexively parodies.

Jane's memoir in *The Bad Sister* connotes an extreme sense of ego. Tennant

⁴¹ Wesley, Marilyn C. 'Emma Tennant: The Secret Lives of Girls'. *British Women Writing Fiction*. Ed. Abby H. P. Werlock. Foreword by Regina Barreca. (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 2000), pp. 175-190 (177).

frequently uses the first person persona at the beginning of sentences as well as recurring dashed short sentences to suit Jane's highly self-conceited style; these techniques effectively depict Jane's recollection of her experience of Meg's magic aid (35-37). These experiences are emblematic of Jane's anger toward the subjugated feminine. She also despises those women who assemble in Paradise Island, eager to articulate their radical protest against Victorian female repression and to announce the new spirit of contemporary social women. She states, 'I feel sympathy for them: they can reign at night . . . but unlike me they are locked in with the darkened goods' (39). This Paradise Island is a church-like place of salvation for women, but for Jane it will erupt with excessive energy: 'I might shoot at the steeple of the church, which is encircled by motorway now: if the elastic were pulled any tighter it would snap and fall' (40). Tennant frequently employs the colon to express Jane's firm, self-justified distaste for any form of protest that is unconnected to bloodbath. She is apparently unaware of her flagrant transgressions of social norms. She is unaware that she is the real 'darkened good' in her search for the murder of the people she hates and for 'the elastic' of this murder (for the murder of herself).

After a while, when Jane associates with Mrs. Marten, a traditional conformist, in the household, she becomes more hysterical regarding Mrs. Marten's intention to stay in her flat. Her description of the household uses narrative circumlocution even in domestic situations (109), reminding us that she would rather be concerned with the tidings of household utensils than be preoccupied with the treatment of this affected over-feminine mother of her boyfriend. Jane's use of this circumlocution strikes a hysterical tone through her use of words like 'big rainspots', 'white plane', 'under the moon' and 'one-eyed, Cyclopean' (110), all of which foreshadow actions to come. Stallybrass and White relate the outbreak of hysteria to an aspect of cultural life that Bakhtin emphasizes: 'post-romantic culture is, to a considerable extent, subjectivised

and interiorised and on this account frequently related to private terrors, isolation and insanity rather than to robust kinds of social celebration and critique'.⁴² Gothic contributes to individual desires, producing a longing for change throughout society. Jane's flat represents not only the demonic rage of the mother-daughter bond but also the demonic anger surrounding gender privilege (she is the daughter-in-law of Mrs. Marten and is afraid of being subjugated into the type of woman that Mrs. Marten represents). However, Jane uses her own household utensils unconsciously to express her rage and hate, her outrage against the myth that gentle women have no self. She is destroyed by the misogynist ideology to which she adheres.

In *Desire in Language*, Kristeva, in her analysis of avant-garde writers' works, argues that a text is a heterogeneous object:

My concern lies in . . . what is heterogeneous, my own negation erected as representation, but the consumption of which I can also decipher. This heterogeneous object is of course a body that invites me to identify with it (woman, child, androgyne?) and immediately forbids any identification; it is not me, it is a non-me in me, beside me, outside of me, where the me becomes lost. This heterogeneous object is a body, because it is a text.⁴³

For Kristeva, the study of language is nothing more than the study of the speaking being: we become who we are while participating in a signifying process. Jane's misogyny, as a heterogeneous articulation of her locked body with Mr. Marten and as a negation of her body 'erected as representation', is most evidenced by the pun figuratively implicated in the relationship between Jane and Tony and between Meg and Gil-Martin. Seeing K (in the Editor's narrative, K is Gil-Martin) leaning towards Meg to listen to her, Jane depicts how she sees herself in K: 'K is I divided by <' (129).

⁴² Stallybrass, Peter and Allon White. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 180.

⁴³ Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 163.

With the subservient meaning of the sign <, Jane subjugates herself to Meg's demands as Gil-Martin does; however, the implied meaning of the sign < refers to the fact that Gil-Martin was always a gentle subordinator to Meg but is now a supervisor providing Meg with the power to coerce Jane. Jane 'circle[ed] over' Mr. Marten 'when they were children', but now 'for his sake' must bring out 'the shadow woman' (the internal Other) that 'Meg needs' (129). This graphic signifier (<) reveals the tension of the battle between heterogeneous subjects, the tension between the demands made on women by a society that forms women either into managing angels or defying monsters.

What do these plays add up to? The pun, I believe, gives latent meaning to Jane's sentence, providing a subtext that dramatically opposes its manifest meaning. Tennant's 'semiotic heterogeneity' (to quote Kristeva⁴⁴) hurls thinking across different frames of reference and sweeps every analogue into a driving, shifting rhythm. What Tennant's pun provides for readers is a demonstration of Jane's desire to defend female subjectivity. We move from the pleasure of subversion to truth. From the pleasure of engaging with graphic artistry, we reach an insight into human motivation. We see how an aggressive desire for power can mask itself as victimisation: we see how an emotion can socially sanction indignation. Tennant frequently alerts her readers to detach themselves from the more crude manifestations of the sensationalism she promotes. Among Gothic's profusion of grammatical punctuation and hyphenated syntax, the ambitious desire of subjectivity is particularly manifest for the hectic style.

⁴⁴ Kristeva indicates a *heterogenous* quality in meaning and in signification within poetic language. This *heterogeneousness* can be genetically detected in the first echolalias of infants as rhythms and intonations anterior to the first phonemes, morphemes and sentences. Later, this *heterogeneousness* is received as rhythms, intonations, glossolalias in psychotic discourse. This discourse applied in literary analysis destroys not only accepted beliefs and significations, but also the thetic consciousness of the signified object and ego. See Kristeva, Julia. 'From One Identity to Another'. (first published in French in 1975; in English in 1980) *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Ed. Hazard Adams. Revised ed. (University

Likewise, in *Two Women of London*, Mara's visual description of Mrs Hyde and Miss Jekyll by video displays a misogynist tone. Mara reports what she captures of the spectral Mrs Hyde and Miss Jekyll in the art gallery, remaining obtusely blind to the real import of her description; readers are informed of the truth by clever sub-reports and by the subtle play on different word senses. Mara's video offers a critique of this century's use of 'Heritage stuff' (181): Londoners may take pleasure in attractive Victorian features like 'lamp-posts, facsimiles of the Victorian originals and insisted on by rich residents of the borough' (214)—even in the 'Victorian fogs of the past' (221); unfortunately, they become appalled when a 'bruised face looks out with sudden ferocity from a corner of the gallery' (184). This apparition with 'a curtain of gold-silk hair with a gash of red torn flesh for a mouth' (184) makes men 'fear and scorn' (184) but draws Mara's 'desperately craving attention' (184). In contrast, she reports that Miss Jekyll's beauty 'keeps it[self] there for the reminder' (182) and that Sir James 'looks like a toad opening and shutting his mouth' (182). Mara sees what she wants to see. But why is it that Mara is so anxious to find value in Hyde and Jekyll? Mara has never known any passionate companions interested in portraying the female experience of victimisation. Her friend Robina, a potentially talented film-maker, lacks opportunities and dislikes Mara. Mara's film of rape-victims is filled with hatred. Tennant implies that Mara may be overly exploitative but that her readers, should comprehend (through these reports) the difficulties facing women who wish to obliterate their fury towards the social abuses of a patriarchal society. Carol Anderson suggests that the name 'Mara' comes from George MacDonald's fin-de-siècle fantasy *Lilith*, which splits 'woman' into 'good' and 'bad'.⁴⁵ Under the imitation of Tennant's

of Washington: Harcourt Brace Javanovich College Publishers, 1992), pp. 1162-1173 (1167).

⁴⁵ Anderson, Carol. 'Emma Tennant, Elspeth Barker, Alice Thompson: Gothic Revisited'. *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2000), pp. 115-130 (121).

parody, the photographic text of Jekyll and Hyde now becomes a critique of a simple dichotomy pervading in the 1980s, 'a period of intense Thatcherite Conservatism'.⁴⁶

Tennant's parody also extends to the Editor's views on Mara and Hyde. The Editor's casual words and phrases (particularly those referring to Mara's description of Hyde, and Hyde's remarks in the camera), which seem entirely objective and spontaneous within the text, together generate a judgmental atmosphere and develop an impression of the Editor's linguistic style. The Editor views Mara as 'no more than a presage of a world where the sole survivors are machines; where the images of people . . . speak in solitude and isolation to each other across time' (258). She treats Mara as no more than a double of Miss Jekyll, as a distressed soul obsessed with an inner 'true mirror image' (258) who is 'keen to speak into camera as [an] actress long starved of a part' (258). The Editor's critical judgment of Mara undoubtedly shows itself as nothing more than another version of misogyny. The Editor lacks pity for Mrs. Hyde's miserable suffering, and depicts Hyde's head like 'a pygmy's head kept by a collector or hunter; and infinitely decayed, as if she could at any time disintegrate altogether, leaving on Mara's screen a pure, blank roomspace' (259). The Editor's critical distance ironically demonstrates that she cannot even escape an internal Other which is 'so alien' (259) and that she prefers this apparition 'persecuted by a hostile state' (259) to disappear. The Editor uses continuous questioning (259) to clarify her position as outside the field of horror; readers clearly feel the invisible fear that underlies that syntax in which the mobility between her words potentially disrupts textual meaning.

The self-evident irony of a character's rage towards her internal Other is likewise evident in Kennedy's *So I am Glad*. However, unlike Tennant's characters

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

who are blind to the truth, Kennedy's Jennifer is very conscious of her confinement in those interaction with a historical idealist. Savinien's narcissism, although irritating to Jennifer, offers Jennifer a way to learn to become more intimate with her internal Other. Jennifer's change, though subtle, is evident in the irony of her past. Jennifer's continual resistance to and distaste for Savinien's narcissism, paradoxically enables her to connect emotionally with her community; it also permits Glasgow to connect with the European centre of Paris. The collapse of Savinien's historical frame, which allows the seventeenth-century Savinien to inhabit twentieth century Glasgow, also offers new historical paths for both Jennifer and the Scottish community.

Savinien searches for his authentic 'I' while recognising his socially split Other, thereby placing himself on a quest that clearly relates not only to his psychological motives but also to cultural pressures. Only when Savinien experiences the dark side of Glasgow's drug culture does Jennifer see him as a similarly 'owned creature' (180) seeking 'shelters' (181) through imagination. While wandering the city, Savinien comes under the control of James, a drug dealer who controls him by either supplying or withholding drugs. James uses Savinien's dueling skill to challenge his enemies, rewarding him with drugs every time he wins. As Jennifer undergoes mental distress, Savinien undergoes his own degradation while battling, killing, and eating an opponent's fighting dog. While betraying his trust in James as well as in himself, Savinien's narcissism fades away. Only when the recovering Savinien duels with James does his sense of self emerge from humanity rather than from blind self-obsession. Savinien brings James to the point of death and then releases him--a gesture of humanity instead of cruelty. Savinien's rage and calm are familiar to Jennifer since such contradictory emotions characterise her own rejected history.

Jennifer's internal Other gradually fades away as Savinien's narcissism decreases through similar interactions. Savinien's change enables Jennifer to rewrite

her past 'ruined ground' (177)—a condition, she explains, that afflicts Scotland specifically. The book she is writing, Jennifer notes, is a way by which to 'live again in minutes and hours which are gone and to forgo my present because it is less satisfactory' (186). She comments that the social ennui and emotional isolation are pervasive: 'my entire country spent generations immersed in more and more passionate versions of its own past, balancing its preoccupations with less and less organised activity or even interest in the here and now' (187). She explains: 'Far more recently the whole island of which my country forms a part was swallowed wholesale by the promise of a ravenously brilliant future' (187). As Cristie Leigh March points out, Scotland becomes preoccupied with the 'ravenous' dreams of glory ever-present in the history of the British Empire—those dreams which remain unfulfilled by Thatcher's isolationist stance.⁴⁷ Speculating on the urban conditions of post-industrial Glasgow, Jennifer implies that Scotland should continuously renew itself rather than immersing itself in a glorious history. As a radio announcer who betrays to her audience her increasing concern with a larger social situation, Jennifer acquires a tone of 'negative comment' (218) in order to arouse public concern within socio-political events. Her sense of belonging shifts from something inherently personal to become something unquestionably communal. Jennifer's linguistic style shifts from a positive (but deceptive) calm to a negative (but enthusiastic) passion. She confesses at the end of her narrative: 'You'll have read . . . the opening of this book, about all of that calmness I no longer have. Sometimes the best beginning is a lie. But I hope you'll accept my apology for it now' (280). This ultimate blurring of the line between fact and fiction undermines the validity of her fury towards societal violence as previously depicted: 'I inhaled so much blasphemy and heresy and original thought that naturally

⁴⁷ March, Cristie Leigh. *Exploring gendered geo-textual space in the contemporary Scottish novel*. Thesis (Ph. D.) (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1999), p. 248.

their atoms and mine became combined, as is wood with fire. I was alchemised' (79).

Savinien's presence creates a change in Jennifer as well as in her view of the Scottish community. Stressing the notion of 'the Other within', Mikhail Bakhtin proposes a 'double-voiced' discourse. Such a discourse—one which emphasises the tension, conflict, or dispute between one and the other—is also called 'internally persuasive discourse' by Bakhtin, and is characteristic of 'half-ours and half-someone else's'.⁴⁸ This struggle for the self-recognition of otherness awakens new and independent worlds. Bakhtin insists that 'the semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is *not finite*, it is open . . . this discourse is able to reveal ever newer *ways to mean*'⁴⁹ in each context in which it appears. The 'internally persuasive discourse' for Jennifer is her dynamic interaction with the foreignness of Savinien. Savinien's narcissism, passion, and eloquence are all antithetical to Jennifer's abnegation, indifference, and silence. It is from Savinien's 'discourse' that Jennifer may recognise her Other and expose it. By realising her love both for others and for herself, Jennifer may liberate herself from the self-imprisonment caused by gender boundaries.

Conclusion

Tennant and Kennedy textually reiterate the spirit of postmodern parody using the fictional device of cultural intertextuality. The presentation of specters demonstrates the force and violence intended by speaking beings and reveals the faint images that are fantastically constructed by those beings (the internal Other). In other words, to speak of the spectral is to confront what plays on the very question of

⁴⁸ Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 345.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

interpretation and identification, to confront that which appears at the limits of representation. The two authors commonly posit the spectre as an exposed, internal Other which expresses rage and protest against its forging context, but that ultimately traverses and blurs any intentional analytical distinction. They demand that the experience of reading rely on a blurring rather than on a recognition of textual projections. Their literary technique encourages a grammatical reading that subtextually resists the lexical reading, and that exemplifies the postmodern use of denial to access the truth.

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan writes the following on intertextuality: 'whereas representation is based on a reference from words to things, intertextuality is a reference from words to words, or rather from texts to texts'.⁵⁰ Whereas earlier Gothic fiction shows the materialisation of ideas (Frankenstein's monster, Dracula) as ironic representations of romantic masculine subjectivity, Tennant and Kennedy employ Gothicism to disclose dramatic psychological transformation, particularly the transformation of women into ideas through a gendered process of (de)construction, and the construction of intertextuality using historical particulars. Gothicism in the two narratives deliberately demonstrates the displacement of ontological representation and the subsequent use of linguistic anti-representation. Their fantastic demons never become real in the way Frankenstein's monster does. Affected by the knowledge that reality is produced in a world of images and myths, Tennant and Kennedy commonly refigure the fantastic demon so as to trace the very limits of their cultural currents. Their de-mystification of the fantastic articulates the most profound reformation of Gothic form.

⁵⁰ Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *A Glance Beyond Doubt: Narration, Representation, Subjectivity*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996), p. 12.

Part Two

Gendering Civilisation: Virginity of The Naked North

Scotland's landscape has widely represented Scotland's national and cultural identity in Scottish literature. Its representation has remained a contentious issue in critical debates on the role of the landscape in Scottish writings, especially in twentieth-century Scottish fiction.¹ Due to the culturally diverse communities that are scattered throughout Scotland, cultural particularities become integral in the authoring of fictional personalities. The authors considered here, Elspeth Barker and Jessie Kesson, must reckon with the ambiguous role played by Scotland's landscape in twentieth-century Scottish fiction. Their novels (in particular Barker's *O Caledonia* set in the 1940s and 1950s, during and post World War II, and Kesson's *The White Bird Passes* set in the 1920s, post-World War I) rhetorically fuse north-eastern Scottish landscape with balladic fantasy. With the exception of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's trilogy, the North-east of Scotland had come to be understood in Scottish literature as an idyllic area unharmed by the deprived social conditions of post-war Scotland. This discrepancy, between the presentation of the North-east as an asocial world of fantasy and its post-war emergence as 'civilised' societies², forges the notion

¹ Nash claims that Sir Walter Scott's treatment of Highland landscape in his writing within a paradigm of fact and realism validates a national identity; whereas, Hewitt argues that psychological identification with the sense of belonging in literary writing reveals regional literature's Otherness to the rest of the nation. Nash, Andrew. 'Understanding the Land in Scot(t)land'. *Terranglian Territories*. Ed. Susanne Hagemann. (Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, 2000), pp. 632-640. Hewitt, David. 'The North-East: Literature and Identity'. *Northern Visions: Essays on the Literary Identity of Northern Scotland in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. David Hewitt. (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995), pp. 190-209.

² The industrial invasion into the North-east happened at 'the rapid decline after the 1930s of other manufacturing industries—clothing, food and drink, paper, chemicals, timber, and leather goods—frequently as a result of competition from the expanding industries of the south. Although the expansion of services acted as a compensating factor, the result was a narrowing of the industrial base by the 1950s'. The autonomy of Scottish capitalism was shattered by 'welfarism' that restricted business autonomy after 1916. This 'planned' transition to industrialisation caused numerous emigrants to move from the North-east to the Lowland Scotland, and lead to a more rapid centralisation of labour.

of the North-east's Otherness and sets the North-east as a myth against Southern realistic sophistication.³

Given that the north-eastern milieu provides particular elements for the literary expression of its Otherness (its political, religious and economic difference from Lowland Scotland, particularly on the way to industrialisation after the World Wars), we must look more carefully into whether or not this literary representation of a local historical account attempts to challenge the dominant forces at work in a particular society. This literary challenge suggests the loss, not just of a number of communal individuals in particular regions, but of an entire generation of Scotland's people as a whole, because cultural authority always involves not simply the predominance of a superior group, but also the alienation of an inferior one. Gender, as a dominant performance produced by social construction, emerges as an immediate and effective vehicle for configuring this regional Otherness.

I contend that the two novels, as represented within the visual terms of landscape and as portrayed through the woman's utterance of her social maltreatment, question the North-east's Otherness as a marginalised location in Scottish writings. Structurally, the two literary works present the unstable social conditions of north-eastern Scotland after the World Wars, and assert their communities as exploited groups encroached upon by an industrialised Lowland Scotland. Rhetorically, their portrayals of gender construction are based upon specific historical moments—religious, economic, and

See Harvie, Christopher. *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Scotland since 1914*. New edition. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993 [1981]), pp. 33, 38, 133.

³ Hewitt defines regional literature's Otherness as a psychological identification with the sense of belonging, and indicates that the content of regional identity can involve 'the natural environment of a region . . . its cultural history . . . its material, religious and political culture, together with a sense of being in opposition to another culture which will often be perceived as politically and economically more powerful' (190). For instance, he claims that Charles Murray and his 'followers' created their own modern myth about the nature of north-eastern Scotland through their fictional association of the dialects of the North-East with country life and agriculture, marking the North-east's Otherness in opposition to the tendencies of the age. Hewitt, David. 'The North-East: Literature and Identity'. *Northern Visions: Essays on the Literary Identity of Northern Scotland in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. David Hewitt. (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995), pp. 190-209.

political—and serve to reveal what civilisation has left behind.

Both writers appropriate the ballad forms that are characteristic of Scottish fantasy and that have been seen to represent ‘Caledonian anti-syzygy’⁴ (or the notion of the Scottish divided self) in order to refute the social anxieties which have impacted post-war culture in north-eastern Scotland. The supernatural and the irrational, two fantastic elements that characterise balladic references in the two novels, succeed in founding an inverse relationship between the bitter reality and the fantastic world which is often preferred to be perceived as the real by fictional characters. Many critics consider Scottish fantasy to be a method for delineating a psychological state, locating fantasy in a contemporary realism that destabilises the binary oppositional relationship between the real and the fantastic. ‘Rather than construct[ing] a parallel world’, Manlove observes, ‘Scottish fantasy tends to locate the workings of the supernatural, or irrational, at the heart of the world we inhabit’.⁵ Manlove suggests that the replacement of a realistic dimension with a fantastic external world centralises the otherwise peripheral role of the fantastic. The Ballad, a literary form inherited from a rich oral tradition, is used by Barker and Kesson to

⁴ In 1919, Gregory Smith set up unique features of Scottish fantasy as the model of the Caledonian anti-syzygy, as two moods in the Scottish character and psyche. Smith, G. Gregory. ‘Two Moods’. *Scottish Literature*. (London: MacMillan, 1919), pp. 1-40. Also see the comment by Edward Cowan and Douglas Smith in *The Polar Twins*: ‘When Gregory Smith wrote his pioneering *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919) he distinguished “two moods” inherent in the Scottish character and psyche, coining the term “Caledonian anti-syzygy” (later taken up by Hugh MacDiarmid and thenceforward grossly overused) to denote what he saw as a fundamental Scottish dualism’. ‘Introduction: Adopting and Adapting the Polar Twins’. *The Polar Twins*. Eds. Edward J. Cowan & Douglas Gifford. (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1000), pp. 1-18 (1). Also, Monterrey mentions a variety of factors which lead to this kind of self, such as ‘the linguistic and tribal variety, the climate severity, the feeling of living in a constantly defeated country, the individualistic set of loyalties, the strong emigration, the supra-national distribution of the economic resources, the Calvinistic predestination and the morals of the elect’. Monterrey, Tomás. ‘Gendered Territories in 20th-C Scottish Fiction’. *Space & Place: The Geographies of Literature*. Eds. Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth. (Liverpool: Liverpool John Moores University Press, 1997), pp. 297-306 (299). Also, Elphinstone looked at fantasy texts by Scottish women in the light of Smith’s model, rejected Smith’s model, and claimed that Scottish fantasy remains a more anarchic and less hierarchical pluralism. See Elphinstone, Margaret. ‘Scottish Fantasy Today’. <http://www.strath.ac.uk/ecloga/elphinstone.pdf> January 30th, 2005. p. 1.

⁵ Manlove, Colin. *Scottish Fantasy Literature: A Critical Survey*. (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1994), p. 2.

effectively express female discontent. Their fictional protagonists practice imaginative defiance by employing particular literary associations at key dramatic moments.

If balladry *records* people's realistic lives in history, this perspective cannot be applied to Scottish ballads. In his non-fiction writing, Scott explores the possibility that 'oral memory may not be a weaker version of written history, but an alternative to it'.⁶ This alternative aspect must lie in the psychological reaction of individuals to historical events. Ballad motifs embody psychological states; they show the internal reactions of an individual to his/her external conditions of existence. The empirical world is thus interrogated by their psychological world. The external conditions of existence are examined by what is acceptable to the individual. The thing that is desired validates reality more than the thing that has been experienced. In other words, fantasy interrogates the rules by which reality is conceived and in doing so, shows its political engagement with the reader.⁷ This fantasy's engagement serves as a circumscribing force to the dominant background at a certain historical age, and exposes the desiring side of the self. Accordingly, this drive of the fantastic engagement operates in the way of the subject's defiance.

If in modern Scottish literature, as Elphinstone suggests, 'the location of the fantastic in the real world is often tied in with a precise topography of the Scottish landscape',⁸ then north-eastern Scotland (particularly as an area of folk tradition in a contemporary rural setting) conceals a collective historical memory as well as individual sentiment within that collective recollection. Writers caricature various psychic dimensions by projecting protagonists' imaginary sentiments onto their

⁶ Penny Fielding discusses history and oral memory in Scott, in reference to Jina Politi's essay. See Jina Politi. 'Narrative and Historical Transformations in *The Bride of Lammermoor*'. *Scottish Literary Journal*. 15/1 (1988), 70-81. Fielding, Penny. *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 103.

⁷ Sullivan, Ceri, and White, Barbara. 'Introduction'. *Writing and Fantasy*. Eds. Ceri Sullivan and Barbara White. (London and New York: Longman, 1999), pp. 1-11.

⁸ Elphinstone, Margaret. 'Scottish Fantasy Today'. <http://www.strath.ac.uk/ecloga/elphinstone.pdf> January 30th, 2005. p. 3.

perceptions of the north-eastern Scottish landscape. This is evidenced through many groups of self-reflective twentieth-century individuals, especially those women living in insecure, post-war conditions—the conditions characterised by financial restriction, political discrimination, and sentimental repression. Barker and Kesson employ the fantasy of romantic love, wherein a violent confrontation with social disciplines, particularly those created by patriarchal institutions, underlines the mode of Scottish psychic struggle as it is projected onto natural landscape.

In order to validate the connection between the symbol of the north-eastern Scottish landscape and the political identity of balladic fantasy, I shall first discuss Kristeva's critical notion of subjugated virginity. Kristeva states that the subjugated concept of virginity for women can be traced back to a religious myth—the role of the Virgin Mary as an intermediary agent between Christ and God. Kristeva claims that the subjugated role of the Virgin Mary in medieval orthodox Christianity subconsciously sanctifies the notion of virginity for women, and that this satisfaction emerges as a theological justification for the subordination of women, even today in the world of symbolic order.

When exploring Kristeva's concept of subjugated virginity as a loss of maternal love in the semiotic dimension (which lies beyond the symbolic order), I will argue that in Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia* (1991) and in Jessie Kesson's *The White Bird Passes* (1958), the representation of landscape in north-eastern Scotland aligns with the female protagonists' identification with lost maternal love. I take the two novels as examples of twentieth-century Scottish women's fiction, where the presentation of the north-eastern landscape provokes discussion about the imprisonment of gender and sheds light on the psychological resistance to, and transgression of, gender reality.

Barker and Kesson draw attention in the two novels to the abjection of those social disciplines that represent the notion of virginity (symbolic maternal), by

describing the main female characters' separation from her social activities and her tendency to immerse herself in the imagination and in interactions with untamed wild nature. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the historical backgrounds in Barker's *O Caledonia* and Kesson's *The White Bird Passes*, which structurally display the subjugated position of the female in post-war rural communities, backgrounds wherein the industrial centralisation of labour predominates, but wherein both authors rhetorically emphasise the female characters' internal rejection of their subjugated position and their interaction with wild nature. Balladic fantasy, as a literary tool that counters the social inequalities, involves a creative complex in regenerating social force. In Chapter Four, I will continue the examination of literary references of textual ballads in the linguistic dimension with Kristeva's views of intertextuality. Barker and Kesson employ ballads as a way for female protagonists to utter their criticism of patriarchal institutions in their rural communities; nevertheless, the two writers ultimately satirise the tone of these literary references in order to demonstrate the oppressed person's psychological revelation. I propose that Barker and Kesson, on the one hand, weave complex self-referential narratives in their novels while at the same time building ambiguities which undermine the very fabric of the ballad and its emotional messages. The two writers call for the enlightenment of those women with the psychic complex of feminine abjection, and hope, by their writing, to render a mental freedom for the opposed.

Chapter Three

The North-East versus Subjugated Virginity

Around the circumference, threaded through sharp green leaves
and twisted branches, runs the legend: 'Moriens sed Invictus',
dying but unconquered. By day little light penetrates this window,
but in early winter evenings, when the sun emerges from the backs
of the looming hills, only to set immediately in the dying distance
far down the glen, it sheds an unearthly glory.

O Caledonia, 1

While Tennant and Kennedy portray the 'dangerous woman' who internalises her anger, Elspeth Barker and Jessie Kesson portray the 'dangerous woman' who grows out of innocent girlhood into a melancholy but passionate womanhood. They explore a woman's method of projecting anger onto the wilds of nature. Nature, particularly the countryside, represents the woman's identity and supports the formidable spirit of her life's dignity. I choose Barker's *O Caledonia* (1991) and Kesson's *The White Bird Passes* (1958) to illustrate the north-eastern Scottish woman's struggle between her desire for an idyllic life and her concerns about the restrictions imposed upon her by civilised society—particularly as those restrictions changed during the post-war periods after two world wars.

Scottish landscape, especially the northern rural regions, has been used to represent national and cultural identity since the time of Sir Walter Scott. Though this literary origin may stem from Scott's romanticisation of the Highlands in the early nineteenth century, the romanticising of landscape continues to provide fictional motifs for twentieth century novels. While Scott validates national and cultural identity in visual descriptions that function 'within a paradigm of fact and realism'¹,

¹ Nash suggests that Scott's literary 'representation of a local community as a documentary account of real life in Scotland' 'held the power to validate a national identity'. He argues that 'the way Scott's

some twentieth-century female novelists do not make use of landscape description for recording the 'reality' of Scottish rural life. Instead, they employ visual description as a medium for psychological projection. Due to the fact that the perception of reality is subjective, if not documentary, and that cultural differences 'exist in relation to tensions between town and country, between cities (e.g. Glasgow and Edinburgh), between rural Highlands and Lowlands, between fishing and farming communities',² some twentieth-century Scottish female writers have personally inscribed imaginary spaces through the documentation of cultural differences in Scottish rural life.

What deserves our attention are the multiple ruralities³ expressed by writers in different places, and how those ruralities correspond to regional identities. If these multiple regional identities, as Tomás Monterrey indicates, show a novelist's 'distinctive [vision] of the complex reality of the Scottish territorial macrocosm in their fictional microcosms',⁴ we may then ask about the ambiguous role which the landscape of the north-eastern Scotland plays in twentieth-century Scottish novels: do these fictional 'microcosms' *deviate from* this 'macrocosm' as an alternative narrative icon? Or, does this territorial 'macrocosm' *marginalise* some of the 'microcosms' as minorities? In an effort to answer this question, I shall first evaluate the contentious realm of contemporary criticism as it concerns the role of landscape in modern Scottish novels. I shall then turn to examine Elspeth Barker's and Jessie Kesson's inscriptions of landscape in *O Caledonia* (1991) and in *The White Bird Passes* (1958) respectively.

works were represented within visual terms' forms the national identity of Scotland, particularly to the non-Scottish readers. Nash, Andrew. 'Understanding the Land in Scot(t)land'. *Terranglian Territories*. Ed. Susanne Hagemann. (Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, 2000), pp. 631-640 (633-634).

² McClure, Derrick, and Merrett, Robert James. 'What is Region and Nation? A Forum'. *Terranglian Territories*. Ed. Susanne Hagemann. (Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, 2000), pp. 649-665 (653).

³ I use this word to mean the diverse local cultures, especially those of the rural areas.

⁴ Monterrey, Tomás. 'Gendered Territories in 20th-C Scottish Fiction'. *Space & Place: The Geographies of Literature*. Eds. Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth. (Liverpool: Liverpool John Moores University Press, 1997). pp. 297-306 (298).

My intention in this chapter is to discuss the contention that the image of otherness is somehow associated with the north-eastern Scottish landscape, and to show how Barker and Kesson challenge this notion of the North-east as an Otherness. Both authors link the negative reaction towards subdued virginity with a similar repulsion for the violating forces of civilisation in the north-eastern Scottish landscape. This landscape's wilderness epitomises the maternal idyll and also its unfettered potential power.

In the first section (3.1), I would like to point out the problems and risks that inhere in some critical viewpoints that hold the north-eastern landscape to be an Otherness in Scottish writings. In the second section (3.2), by drawing upon Kristeva's idea of the abjection of virginity in light of her interpretation of the Virgin Mary's role as intercessor between the Son Christ and Father God, I will use this notion of the ideal virgin (one which deeply influences gender relationship in western culture) to examine the female position in both novels as one characterised by the subjugated notion of the ideal virgin. In the third section (3.3), I will show that Barker's and Kesson's novels attempt to separate out the wilderness of nature (as particularly embodied in the female protagonists) from the symbolic order which threatens the female protagonists' wild and fantastic universe. I will concentrate on how these fictions articulate the violation that is produced by a civilisation that is dominated by patriarchal power, and that is encroaching upon the nature's heritage of north-eastern Scotland. The fourth section (3.4) examines the way that a moral and spiritual necessity for liberation is concomitant with the call for rural wilderness.

The central argument of this chapter draws upon a shared novelistic response to postmodern indeterminacy: beneath the overt reproach of the violation caused by the various forces of patriarchal institutions, there exists a rebellious reaction. The heroines' abjection of the socially subjugated notion of the ideal virgin, causes their

own bewildered identification with the image of lost maternity⁵: this is symbolised by the natural power of north-eastern Scotland.

3.1 *Interrogating the North-East's Otherness*

Through her analysis of contemporary Scottish novels, Anna Paterson regards the portrayal of Scotland's landscape as a stereotypical wilderness. She argues that it is this very perception of Scottish landscape by Scotland's people that gives it its national identity.⁶ She suggests that Scotland's landscape, particularly its northern less populated rural settings, functions as a symbol of Otherness in the literature of the Lowlands of Scotland, as well as in the literatures of other countries in terms of regional literary coloration. The icon of the northern Scottish landscape, in Paterson's view, remains as a regional and national identity. We can be certain of her view that the regional wilderness, especially the north of Scotland, has become a symbol of national identity through the wilderness as it often appears in the public media. Her contention, however, that this wilderness becomes a literary Otherness to the literatures both of the Lowlands and of other countries, needs to be questioned and re-evaluated. The interiorisation of the landscape in modern Scottish novels generates a sense of belonging; however, it does not follow that literary features of a local community can be marked as a regional or national Otherness to what is outside this

⁵ Kristeva's idea of abjection suggests that the *fully* symbolic body must bear no indication of its debt to nature, and that the image of woman's body, because of its maternal functions, acknowledges its debt to nature and consequently is more likely to signify the abject. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. p. 102. However, this abjection of maternal function which has been socially repressed produces the search of the lost maternity. See Oliver, Kelly. *Reading Kristeva: unraveling the double-bind*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 53.

⁶ Paterson argues that the role of the landscape in the iconology of Scotland illustrates the divide between reality and patriotic invention. The reality is the cityscape (unstructured fringes of housing and industrial estates) but wilderness becomes identified with nationhood and patriotic invention in literature. Paterson, Anna. *Scotland's Landscape: Endangered Icon*. (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2002), p. 34.

sense of belonging.

If a local sense of belonging accounts for the otherness of a region, we may say that this Otherness can be based on regional uniqueness in the realm of historical development, but not on the political division between subjectivity and its Otherness. While analysing some Scottish novelists who elaborate the nature of north-eastern Scotland, David Hewitt points out the uniqueness of the North-east's Otherness. He indicates that the language employed in some Scottish novels about the nature of the North-east not only marks the otherness of this region but also provides a connection between the adult present and the youthful past.⁷ From Hewitt's perspective, the North-east's Otherness obviously binds itself with time, with the discrepancy between the inclinations of different ages. Nevertheless, Hewitt ostensibly ignores the fact that this discrepancy, although characteristic of a local culture at a particular place and time, results from more than one of the local communities' economic and political conditions. The dynamic interaction between financial and political conditions in different communities leads to various discrepancies between superior and inferior developments in different regions. What the literary configuration of these discrepancies concerns, through the depiction of landscape, is Scotland's social condition as a whole and the nation's imbalance of regional powers.

This national concern is fully revealed through the insecure social conditions in these two novels. The two writers make north-eastern communities into distinct segregated societies, showing their 'Otherness' in opposition to industrial invasion by the Lowland Scotland. This Otherness relies on the inferior development of north-eastern Scotland as compared to southern industrial development at some critical, historic moments. Barker and Kesson both depict this Otherness as a result of

⁷ Hewitt, David. 'The North-east: Literature and Identity'. *Northern Visions: Essays on the Literary Identity of Northern Scotland in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. David Hewitt. (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995), pp. 190-209 (205).

industrial exploitation and regional withdrawal, examining the North-east's interaction with the invading forces of civilisation that are coming from the Lowland Scotland (specifically with regard to economic, political and religious conditions after two World Wars). They depict the invading and oppressive power of politics, finance and religion through the configuration of fictional characters who symbolise certain political and religious ideas at specific post-war periods. The two writers invalidate this Otherness by inscribing it onto the landscape in response to the external power's abuse and self-exile. Their regional identities in these myth-makings connote special psychological elements.

If ruralism maintains regional traditions, then the role of landscape in Barker's *O Caledonia* (1991) and Kesson's *The White Bird Passes* (1958) represents the *metamorphosis* of the female protagonists from a naïve child into a melancholic beauty. The treatments of north-eastern landscape involves gender issues in both these novels. This dimension warrants an attention to the contentious issue about how the landscape contributes to the figuration of fictional characters, and how it serves to maintain a regional identity. Anderson and Christianson, in the introduction of *Journeys Into Being*, point out the significance of diverse traditions as they are preserved in contemporary Scottish women's writing. They indicate that:

By pluralizing the 'journey' in our title, we hope to suggest the variety and range of experiences that these women writers explore: the spiritual dimensions as well as the material, the social and historical as well as the metaphysical . . . We do not see these writers as coming out of any one single and unified 'Scottish tradition'.⁸

Their introduction suggests that critics might give a limited reading with universal significance. When examining the issues that Scottish women faced in an earlier, stringently patriarchal Scotland, we cannot ignore the role of the past, particularly the

⁸ Anderson, Carol and Christianson, Aileen. 'Introduction'. *Scottish Women's Fiction, 1920s to 1960s: Journeys Into Being*. (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 7-19 (8 & 10).

role of past cultural circumstances in the construction of womanhood in twentieth-century Scottish communities. Anderson suggests that the approach to the material makes a strong case for understanding any culture's struggle to escape patriarchy.⁹ The construction of womanhood in Scottish communities of the twentieth century, those which are affected by various forms of material culture (from the economic to the natural), significantly highlights the north-eastern Scottish motif and its embodiment in female figures.

We may infer here that generalising the role of Scotland's landscape as an Otherness in Scottish writings seems to exclude economically marginalised cultures in Scottish writings. This economically inferior Otherness cannot be identified with literary Otherness. In 'Peripheries', Cairns Craig describes the way in which F. R. Leavis absorbs elements of peripheral cultures—in the works of Joseph Conrad and Henry James, for example—in order to establish a unified and apparently homogeneous model of 'English' literature.¹⁰ The critical criterion adopted by Leavis in *The Great Tradition* favours fixed moral standards and resolution, reinforcing the notion of totality, rather than challenging it. Catherine Belsey also comments on Leavis's literary strategy, arguing that the dominant culture, by absorbing the standards of peripheral cultures, produces a set of criteria to sustain a hierarchy of subjectivity and consequently to retain its power:

Trained in the kind of discrimination demonstrated in *The Great Tradition*, the leaders of the community are to be properly equipped to recognise a hierarchy of subjectivity, mysteriously given to individuals, and judged on the basis of a knowledge not open to rational argument. By this means, a ruling elite provides itself with a sensibility which is the source and guarantee of its right to control and administer experience.¹¹

⁹ *Ibid.*, Anderson adopts a materialist feminist approach in the analysis of Scottish womanhood in an essay 'Feminine Space, Feminine Sentence: Rebecca West's *The Judge*', pp. 32-44.

¹⁰ Craig, Cairns. 'Peripheries'. *Cencrastus*. 9 (Summer 1882): 3-9.

¹¹ Belsey, Catherine. 'Re-reading the great tradition'. *Re-Reading English*. Ed. Peter Widdowson. (London: Routledge, 1982), pp. 121-135 (129).

Belsey implies that a set of criteria, uncensored by 'rational argument' and passed down from leaders of the community to individuals, too readily maintain a communal imagination. We may again say that the traditional concept of a community cannot sufficiently emerge as a standardising literary mode. In *The Modern Scottish Novel*, Cairns Craig points out recent shifts in various perspectives on national identities, literary history and language varieties, some of which reverse traditional judgments on Scottish fiction.¹² He suggests that these shifts, rather than being concurrent with recognised traditions, do not champion ideal communities but seriously reflect a society broken and divided in religion, values and language.¹³ It is these cultural differences rather than cultural minorities that constitute various forms of local literary Otherness.

Barker and Kesson both demonstrate the distinctive qualities of the north-eastern Scottish situation in their own terms, and reveal an evaluation of what may be valuable in it. Their fictional undertones, which criticise conventional literary modes, echo Craig's call for reassessment in the conclusion of 'Peripheries':

Recognising the vitality of the periphery is the first step towards overthrowing the dominant conceptions of tradition; overthrowing those traditions will release the vitality of the periphery.¹⁴

If projecting one's identity onto wild natural settings can be regarded as a method of peripheral thinking (as a way of creating a dream world far from the real world), then the intention of overthrowing social traditions can be seen as the underlying condition of many divided selves in Scottish fiction. These divided selves long to escape their claustrophobic communities and to be released in liberating values: paradoxically, they need communal loyalties in order to wrestle with contending moral and

¹² Craig claims that modern Scottish novels are apt to define some of the distinctive elements that constitute a tradition and examine how this tradition has gone into the maintenance of a specifically national imagination. Craig, Cairns. *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 9-36.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁴ Craig, Cairns. 'Peripheries'. *Cencrastus*. 9 (Summer 1882): 3-9. p. 9.

communal value systems. This version of Scottish anxiety suggests a conceptual dislocation from how they assume their worlds operate. We may assume that it is these melancholy perceptions and patriotic inventions of the north-eastern Scottish landscape that contribute to the figuration of a marginalised self in an exploited but forsaken rurality.

3.2 *Jettisoning Subjugated Virginity*

After examining the role of north-eastern Scottish landscape as a literary icon of Otherness, we must continue to investigate how the abjection of marginalised landscape connects with the repulsion of the socially prescribed value of the ideal virgin in the symbolic order and how the search for maternal love links with the wilderness of landscape. Kristeva's analysis of the traditional cult of the Virgin offers particular insight into women's cultural insecurity. According to Kristeva, the cult of the Virgin stems from the medieval Orthodox Christian view of the Virgin Mary, who acted as intermediary between a mortal sacred Christ and the omnipotent God. The Virgin Mary is modeled upon the role of intercessor, 'content to pass from life to death via the intermediary of the "Dormition"', 'at the cost of a "pilgrimage of the Mother of God amid the torments"'.¹⁵ Sanctification of her suffering and sorrow suggests her virtue and immortality, and therefore *excuses* her boundless immersion in suffering. Kristeva regards Mary as embodying 'signs of an extraordinary predisposition to masochism'.¹⁶ In other words, Kristeva asks what is subtle in the social and psychological functions of the cult of the Virgin, while this edifice

¹⁵ Clément, Catherine and Kristeva, Julia. *The Feminine and the Sacred*. Trans. Jane Marie Todd. European Perspectives. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 73.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

represses the modern woman's experience of virginity. This is what Kristeva calls the problem of 'feminine paranoia'.¹⁷ For Kristeva, this religious cult of the Virgin Mary is overt in its attempts to define what it is in the feminine. This leads women to write in a form that challenges phallogentrism.

Through her account of her own childbirth in 'Stabat Mater', Kristeva introduces what has been repressed in the religious discourse of maternity: the semiotic body. In the left column of this article, Kristeva says:

Let a body venture at last out of its shelter, take a chance with meaning under a veil of words. WORD FLESH. From one to the other, eternally, broken up visions, metaphors of the invisible.¹⁸

The left column is the flesh that became word—some of this mother's music, the semiotic subject rather than the symbolic body. Kristeva claims that the corporeal mother with her *jouissance*, her 'sexual-intellectual-physical passion, of death' replaces the Mother-God.¹⁹ Transcendence into the semiotic realm symbolises a search for the lost maternal love that *precedes* the entrance into the symbolic order. While the right column depicts the religious discourse of the Virgin, the left column elaborates what is left out of the symbolic discourse.

Kristeva indicates in an interview with Rosalind Coward that 'with the two columns and the two kinds of typeface she wanted to give the impression of a scar or wound'.²⁰ Kelly Oliver particularly comments on the scar, writing that the semiotic maternal is castrated as any discourse on maternity.²¹ Oliver claims that childbirth

¹⁷ Commented by Toril Moi on Kristeva's 'Stabat Mater'. Kristeva, Julia. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Trans. Léon S. Roudiez. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1986), p. 160.

¹⁸ Kristeva, Julia. 'Stabat Mater'. *The Portable Kristeva*. Ed. Kelly Oliver. Updated edition. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 310-333 (311).

¹⁹ In reference to Kristeva's 'Stabat Mater' in *Tales of Love* (1976), pp. 262-263. Oliver, Kelly. *Reading Kristeva: unraveling the double-bind*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 53.

²⁰ In reference to Kristeva's conversation with Rosalind Coward. 'Julia Kristeva in Conversation with Rosalind Coward'. *Desire, ICA Documents*, 22-27. p. 24. Oliver, Kelly. *Reading Kristeva: unraveling the double-bind*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 53.

²¹ Oliver, Kelly. *Reading Kristeva: unraveling the double-bind*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 53.

necessarily means losing the child, since the mother identifies with the castration of a mother who has lost her own mother, and searches for the bitter reunion through childbirth.²² Since the repressed is exactly an encounter/identification with the lost mother, the pregnant mother positions herself in the place of the scar and encounters the maternal semiotic. This painful but sweet encounter and identification with the maternal semiotic transcends the realm of the maternal symbolic (oppressed female body). Kristeva herself indicates that this 'feminine paranoia' is primarily narcissism:

We live in a civilisation where the consecrated (religious or secular) representation of femininity is absorbed by motherhood. . . . this motherhood. . . involves less an idealised archaic mother than the idealization of the *relationship* that binds us to her, one that cannot be localized—an idealisation of primary narcissism.²³

In this respect, feminine abjection imposed itself upon social representation, causing a denigration of women. A woman's rejection of the ideal of virginity in search of the identification with the feminine 'before the beginning' (in Kristeva's view, in this sense, virginity itself)²⁴ comes to no avail, as no available symbolic code can guarantee this radical 'transcendence'. Only when 'the relationship with Mary and from Mary is revealed as the prototype of love relationships', can women find justification in declaring Mary to be the Mother of the divine institution on earth, the Church.²⁵ However, Kristeva continues that even when this love is filled with justification, it forms nothing more than a guardian for 'two fundamental aspects of Western love: courtly love and child love, thus fitting the entire range that goes from sublimation to asceticism and masochism'.²⁶ We may say that the sublimation of a

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Kristeva, Julia. 'Stabat Mater'. *The Portable Kristeva*. Ed. Kelly Oliver. Updated edition. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 310-333 (310).

²⁴ Clément, Catherine and Kristeva, Julia. *The Feminine and the Sacred*. Trans. Jane Marie Todd. European Perspectives. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 73.

²⁵ Kristeva, Julia. 'Stabat Mater'. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Trans. Léon S. Roudiez. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1986), pp. 160-186 (164 -165).

²⁶ Kristeva, Julia. 'Stabat Mater'. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. Trans. Léon S. Roudiez. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1986), pp. 160-186 (165).

woman's suffering under asceticism and masochism improperly justifies the over-praised value of the physical and psychological sacrifice of virginity in a society where a woman's position is subservient to the status of a second sex.

Since the female love is subjugated to either a plane of gender passion or to a plane of generative function, the feminine power is degraded to a secondary position, both in the family and in the city due to the female body. Barker and Kesson write their central figures as characters who defy the social principles of the ideal virgin as prescribed for the female body. Their female protagonists struggle to break the bonds of fearful communities in order to achieve spiritual emancipation. Barker and Kesson intriguingly elaborate woman's bewildered existence by linking her encounter with the socially subdued value of virginity and her psychological projection of abjection into the landscape. Their novels demonstrate a deep concern for the modern loss of communal awareness regarding maternal virtues, virtues such as inspiration and imagination. Their female protagonists mourn over social disrespect towards violation of the female body, while desiring to discover its survival in an enduring sense of a marginalised but wild landscape. These female protagonists tend to yearn for natural and non-rational powers, suggesting that a woman's social position is not properly esteemed and that any sexual abuse can never be fairly redeemed. This literary tendency echoes Craig's view that Scotland needs both its devils and its lost monsters as part of its soul, along with the wild region that is part of its pre-rational identity.²⁷ Craig's view implies that there has always been a formidable spirit in Scottish nationality; even though this nationality is routinely embodied as an innocent child in literature, Scottish dignity cannot be subdued. Scotland's potentially demonic powers

²⁷ While discussing MacDiarmid's and the Renaissance's central recognition in *A Drunk Man* and elsewhere, Craig shows this view in his evaluation of the writers' vision as a dark view of the human condition. Craig, Cairns. *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 22.

may usefully counteract the injustices that attempt to violate its nature. From this perspective, we may say that the north-eastern Scottish landscape, with its pre-rational wilderness and demonic reaction, becomes a symbol of innocence and naïveté for regional identity and spiritual liberation.

David Hewitt also points out the formation of regional identity as subjective, exclusive but independent:

‘identity’ is a protean concept; while the word seems to imply something knowable and definable, its content is legion: the natural environment of a region, its communal, popular and cultural history, its modes of winning and living, its material, religious and political culture, together with a sense of being in opposition to another culture which will often be perceived as politically and economically more powerful.²⁸

‘Another culture’ with ‘politically and economically more powerful’ contingencies is associated with patriarchal authority in Barker’s and Kesson’s fiction. Their female protagonists jettison their socially subjugated position and reject the culturally suppressed values of virginity, engaging instead in wild imaginings and the spontaneous flow of joy with nature. In order to oppose the repression of the symbolic law that is characterised by male-dominated institutions, these heroines consciously dismiss such authority and unconsciously identify with nature’s nurturing (though ever wild and sometimes threatening) powers. They consciously deny the virginal attributes and unconsciously yearn for the greater natural power to redress what cannot be substantially defined as ‘Otherness’. North-eastern Scotland, fertile (but exploited) and abundant in natural dark forces, becomes a venture of ‘radical transcendence’²⁹ over the symbolic order of femininity (in Kristeva’s view, virginity

²⁸ Hewitt, David. ‘The North-East: Literature and Identity’. *Northern Visions: Essays on the Literary Identity of Northern Scotland in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. David Hewitt. (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995), pp. 190-209 (190).

²⁹ Indicated by Kristeva to Clément in a letter: ‘before time, before the subject, before the beginning’, ‘nonplace before the beginning has been designated feminine or maternal’. She understands the feminine as ‘something completely different from a symmetrical double of the masculine’. Clément, Catherine and Kristeva, Julia. *The Feminine and the Sacred*. Trans. Jane Marie Todd. European

itself). Barker's and Kesson's central characters are prone to identify something as being the true feminine, which is completely different from a symmetrical role of the symbolic order.

The improperly over-praised value of ideal virginity, according to Kristeva, becomes the 'polluting value' and draws out the borders of the body within the sexual difference.³⁰ What deserves our attention is that this socially polluting value also generates psychological pollution. In Kristeva's view, woman is specifically related to two categories of pollution: excremental and menstrual. Excrement threatens the identity from the outside while menstrual blood represents the danger from within.³¹ For Kristeva, these two defilements 'stem from the *maternal* and/or the feminine' and are 'a primal mapping of the body' that 'illustrate the boundary between semiotic authority and symbolic law'.³² The excremental defilement is evidenced through the fictional heroines' worlds of *symbolic law* that represses woman's creative power. Their psychological distancing from more dominant ideals produces menstrual pollution which ironically shows their self-inflicted marginalisation—their intentional mapping of a link between their oppressed body and nature. In other words, the authors' female protagonists identify themselves with natural wild power in order to counter-balance the power of *symbolic authority* as it is embodied in patriarchal institutions. In these two novels, this is not told us by a narrative voice but is presented instead through the narrative itself. We may discern this fearful self in the female protagonists' pre-mature stage of girlhood and in its effects on their perception of gender roles once they reach the stage of womanhood. The literary imagination and natural partiality that pervades their girlhood become variants of the abjection of

Perspectives. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 73.

³⁰ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. Trans. Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 71.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 71-73.

social gender roles.

Although menstrual pollution signifies the heroines' poignant protest against external authority over the female body, it retains the exuberant vitality of a sensuous wilderness. Kristeva stresses the ambivalence of menstrual pollution as the abject: on the one hand, it indicates 'the impure' while on the other hand, it 'also refers to women, fertility, and the assurance of fecundation'.³³ It is 'where *death* and *femininity*, *murder* and *procreation*, *cessation of life* and *vitality* all come together'.³⁴ This vitality remains differentiated from the system of worldly values (in these two novels, the institutional authorities of patriarchy) and remains linked with the motors of natural vigour (the heroines' energetic inspiration from nature and literature). The phenomena that Barker and Kesson recognised in the Scottish North-east after two World Wars, is gradual depopulation. They write of an enormous reduction in the scope of human activity such that the distance between the maternal, as symbolised by the secluded and naïve North-east, becomes obviously separated from the secular in civilisation, and is epitomised by the cruelty and blood-lust of patriarchy. This reveals the two novelists' conscious intent to deal with a society whose scale of values is out of proportion with their own demands.

3.3 *Defilement of the Maternal / Virginal Joy*

Barker and Kesson both interrogate a literary mode that marks the North-east's 'Otherness', binding its differentiators together and providing a revised interpretation of the relationship between the human condition and regional, rural identity. As concerns the historical specifics of particular periods, these two writers generate

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

myths in order to oppose the tendencies of two post-World Wars (for Barker, the 1940s and 1950s; for Kesson, the 1920s) and to invite their readers to probe the human condition and its link with north-eastern Scottish landscape.

Elspeth Barker considers the religious oppression of the female body in *O Caledonia*. The fact that Barker's *O Caledonia* obtains its title from the opening of Canto VI, Verse 2, of Scott's narrative poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*—'O Caledonia! Stern and wild, / Meet nurse for a poetic child!'³⁵—foregrounds an ironic but poignant mimicry of a 'poetic child' abused by Caledonia, that place of no 'meet nurse'. Barker's *O Caledonia* portrays Janet's childhood and adolescence at her family's stern and forbidding home in north-eastern Scotland in the years after World War Two. This novel laments religious rigidity within economic and gendered hierarchies of class during post-war life, but at the same time, celebrates the beauty of place. The disparate scenes between the culture's rigidity and the landscape's poetic climate reinforce the central protagonist's sentiment of natural celebration.

Calvinism, a religious force that at one time permeated every level of Scottish life, lays out the repressive nature of its social practice. Fionn MacColla describes Calvinism as unnatural, disruptive and reductive, always denying individual fulfillment by preaching the absolutist Judgment of the next world.³⁶ In a world governed by a God who demands moral absolutes, humanity must be continually aware of Original Sin because salvation has only been predetermined for the Elect; this salvation, however, remains a matter of uncertainty to those who pray for their sins. In discussing the ethical representation of Calvinism in Scottish novels, Glenda Norquay also indicates that an individual's lack of hope leads him/her towards a

³⁵ Anderson, Carol. 'Emma Tennant, Elspeth Barker, Alice Thompson: Gothic Revisited'. *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 117-130 (124).

³⁶ MacColla, Fionn. *At the Sign of the Clenched Fist*. Ed. John Herdmam. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), pp. 180-182.

dangerous disregard for the quality of deeds and action.³⁷ Calvinism's metaphysical implications (a sense of uncertainty in a world of flawed existence and irreconcilable fatality for humankind) produces, as Norquay observes, Scottish anxieties that challenge moral realism in Scottish fictions.³⁸ If this Scottish anxiety results partly from the oppressive nature of Calvinist theology on predestination, then gender anxiety, as a constant social issue, must inevitably fall prey to Calvinism's social dominance.

In Calvinist culture, the female body plays an 'abject' role. Jennie Rubio suggests that:

for Knox, the body is a metaphor both for the evils invading society as well as the sin invading the spiritual self. In his religious and political writings, the female body often becomes a symbol of horror, the site of the sin which destabilises spiritual identity. Arguing that because women represent the body they should be banished from political power which requires considerable 'male' rationality.³⁹

In Calvinist society, 'the site of sin' is apparently equated with the female body as an excuse for male sexual menace and male 'rational' domination of femininity. On the danger of filth, Kristeva stresses that the power of pollution is 'not an inherent one' but 'it is proportional to the potency of the prohibition that founds it'.⁴⁰ We may say that man's fear of the female body as a sinful object derives from the religious discrimination imposed upon the female body, that the prohibition of spiritual liberation breeds pollution.

In *O Caledonia*, Barker situates the setting first in Edinburgh and then in the Highlands: Janet is born into 'the unrelenting chill of a Calvinist world' (6) where she

³⁷ Norquay, Glenda. *Moral Absolutism in the Novels of Robert Louis Stevenson, Robin Jenkins and Muriel Spark*. Ph.D. Thesis. University of Edinburgh, 1985. p. 35.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁹ Rubio, Jennie. "'Escaping her Carapace': Calvinism and the Body in Alice Munro and Elspeth Barker". *Scottlands*. 2.1 (1995): 74-87. p. 77.

⁴⁰ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. Trans. Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 69.

learns about God's 'watchful and punitive presence' (8). She soon becomes preoccupied with the knowledge of original sin and predestination,⁴¹ imagining herself as being punished for what is the unknown. First, she is punished by being forced to become 'a big girl' (9); later she is sacrificed at the 'altar of womanhood' (130). She lives in a household run by a 'grim insistence on self-control and cleanliness' (16) and she goes to the church where the minister addresses 'the wrath of God':

Be ye ashamed . . . for ye were born in sin'. Forgiveness there might be in the next world, but not in this, and there would be the day of Judgment . . . The damned sat bleakly upright on the hard bare pews, unflinchingly accepting his verdicts. (32-33)

The landscape, as if responding to the harshness of retribution, is figured by the 'unforgiving sea' (16) to be heaps of pillows 'staring unforgivingly' from windows (11). The repeated image of the eye suggests many 'watchful, punitive presences': from the minister's reminding his parishioners that 'ye'll no pull the wool over God's eyes' (33), to the cat 'glaring . . . with unflinching malevolence' (20). Later, when Janet's family moves to Auchnasaugh, a castle in the Highlands, they encounter a landscape of begrudging history near to where an ancient Scottish King was murdered, 'transfixed' with a spear thrown in vengeance (34). Young Janet imagines God as 'clad in a butcher's striped apron' (8) and her society responds to her premature death with calloused prejudice—'The lass had only herself to blame' (3).

The abject is particularly important in religious discourse. Kristeva argues that by following Christ, pollution and sin become located *within* the speaking subject,

⁴¹ Rubio summarises the fundamental beliefs of Calvinism although it is not an easy theology: 'it emphasises both humanity's fallen nature following its disobedience in Eden, as well its damnation for its sins. But although wrathful, the Calvinist God is also merciful and just, and has pre-selected certain people for salvation, a selection that is both undeserved and arbitrary. Human knowledge of it is forever uncertain because, with the fall, humanity also lost its ability to apprehend God's will.' Rubio, Jennie. "'Escaping her Carapace": Calvinism and the Body in Alice Munro and Elspeth Barker'. *Scotlands*. 2.1 (1995): 74-87. p. 75.

rather than without.⁴² The female body, as an image of the punishment for sin, demonstrates the protest of 'pollution' when inflicted by patriarchal society upon female madness. Janet's role model, Lila, her family's resident madwoman in the attic (63), induces Janet to imagine herself as being her school's 'madcap of the Fourth' (64), who is considered mad simply for her intellect (72). Janet's mother Vera, however, expects her daughter to be transformed into a secular and more traditionally accepted girl (120). She encourages this by taking Janet to a hairdresser's salon. The salon reminds Janet of the lunatic asylum to which Cousin Lila is assigned because its 'neon-lit inner torture chamber of throbbing machines' (130) seems like a place for the crucifixion of women, or 'the dim, blood-boultered altar of womanhood' (130). Menstrual pollution influences Janet from childhood to womanhood and ominously foreshadows Janet's murder at the age of sixteen.

The bitterness of Calvinist culture not only marks the living attitudes of Janet's community elders', but also highlights the treatment of her peers. Depicted from the start as a victim of religious culture, Janet is taunted by the boys (59) and defends herself from the sexually rampant Raymond Dibdin (68). Janet wants to imagine the family house as romantic and dignified, but discovers a hidden cache of pornography. The visiting boy catches her in the act of perusing it in disgust and gets excited, '[b]randishing and waving a dreadful dark pink baton' at her 'out of the front of his shorts' (68), and trying to kiss her. Even Janet's companion, her spirit-like pet jackdaw, tries to lure her into her pocket to mate (145). By imaging herself as nature's elect, or as a form of spiritual predestination, Janet is vulnerable to a fear of 'bodily' predestination (36). This explains why when she enters womanhood at the age of sixteen, she play-acts a black-garbed 'femininity', feeling 'strong and bright and beautiful' (150). Her violent and Gothic demise is thus foreshadowed.

⁴² Lechte, John. *Julia Kristeva*. (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 165.

For Kristeva, the feminine remains 'synonymous with a radical evil that is to be suppressed'.⁴³ We may note that what is to be suppressed is exactly that which waits to rampage. Although Janet desires to lead a life of intellectual spirituality, none of the cultural scripts are compatible with her life and she has 'no way [to express] her state in words, no way of escaping her carapace' (108). Barker explores the Calvinist implication that the abject body is an inescapable prison that the spirit cannot escape and makes the body vulnerable to the physical world. Janet is stabbed by the pornography-gathering gardener, Jim, with his rabbit-skinning knife, and is found 'oddly attired in her mother's black lace evening dress, twisted and slumped in bloody, murderous death' (1). Like a Calvinist minister, Jim had 'come in to turn off the music and the lights' (152) and slyly made Janet into one of his 'slaughtered innocents' (37). Jim's hissed words—'You filthy wee whore' (152)—suggest the misogyny and ruthlessness of a life-denying Calvinist culture.

The possibility of converting an era's culture relies, perhaps, on the remembrance of past lessons. Janet's parrot-keeping family evokes the dangers contained in the oblivion of the past. Janet's grandfather's belief that 'ancient parrots should be fêted . . . as true archivists' implies the danger of allowing the history of female victimisation to repeat itself uncriticised, and warns women that their destiny through violence is madness and death. This is evidenced through Janet's and Lila's fictional ends. The mad, Russian-born Lila is effectually erased as 'all her past was gone' (42), and Janet's death 'was to be forgotten' (2). Although Janet is convinced that 'forgetting [is] the only possible way of forgiving' (87), her belief recalls a new start after the oblivion of the inhuman part of her past. As at the end of the novel, her spirit is borne away by the 'wild winds of dawn' (152); the dawn wind promises the

⁴³ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. Trans. Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 70.

possibility of rebirth: the wind 'brought the next day, and whirled the past off into the breaking clouds: a wind thrilling and melancholy, tender and cruel, a wind of beginning and ending' (109). As Christianson suggests, Janet's upper-middle-class family might be seen as a 'case study of eccentric sub-aristocracy',⁴⁴ and this eccentric sub-aristocracy in *O Caledonia* seems nurtured by the Calvinist inscription of the female body. In my opinion, this Calvinist domination over the female body derives from a distrust of human self-discipline, particularly as practiced by women. Calvinist restrictions here also show the lack of human love for the individual self and others, as well as the deficiencies of human confidence when it comes to individual autonomy and personal destiny. Through *O Caledonia*, Barker has re-writes the historical construction of the body, suggesting that the female body has its own predestination free from patriarchal religion and aggressive warfare.

As there are multiple regional identities, so are there multiple ruralities expressed by people in different places. In some ways that are similar to *O Caledonia*, Kesson's *The White Bird Passes* shows how a young girl's innocent pleasure in childhood is mistreated by social disrespect towards the female body. Kesson indicates in her journal titled 'My Scotland' that there were two growing places for her: maternal joy and female sensibility: 'Both of these small areas of Scotland moulded me, laid claim on me, as I do on them, Morayshire . . . the heart. Aberdeenshire . . . the mind'.⁴⁵ The Elgin slum of Morayshire renders a hearty joyfulness to the Young Janie while the Skene orphanage of Aberdeenshire bestows upon her the bitter enlightenment of adult sexuality. Like Barker in *O Caledonia*, Kesson explores the boundaries that construct social and sexual identity, by mapping out the different worlds Janie inhabits at her

⁴⁴ Christianson, Aileen. 'Elspeth Barker, Candia McWilliam and Muriel Spark, Writers in Exile'. *Terranglian Territories: Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on the Literature of Region and Nation*. Ed. Susanne Hagemann. (Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, 2000), pp. 339-347 (340).

⁴⁵ Kesson, Jessie. 'My Scotland'. *The Scottish Review*. 35 (1984): 39-41. p. 41.

childhood and in her womanhood respectively.

Janie's illegitimate birth begins with her mother Liza's unconventional sex life as an amateur 'old-fangled' whore (*The White Birds Passes*, 16). Without a father, Janie lacks a sound family with a mother 'in rare, enchanting moods' (65). The rare communication between Janie and her mother make the young girl identify a few other mother-like characters, all of whom provide definition for Janie's emerging identity; her relationship to them, however, leads to tragedy within their patriarchal community. The first mother-like character to suffer tragedy in Janie's Lane is Mysie Walsh. She is the only prostitute in the street apart from Liza, and is a warm exciting figure to Janie. It is not the suicide of Mysie Walsh, her mother's warmer and more extroverted companion, which makes Janie concerned for her mother. Rather, it is Liza's reaction to Mysie's suicide and funeral, when Liza states enviously that, 'Mysie Walsh's in the best place' (36), which makes Janie concerned that her mother may crave death. The treatment of time here is a deliberate device used to depict Janie's life in the Lady's Lane over an abbreviated seven days: from chapter one, where a depressed Mysie sends Janie for cheese, through the discovery of Mysie's corpse that evening and her funeral, and finally to the brief but futile escape of Liza and Janie to the Diddle Doddle (the boarding house accommodating the socially 'marginalised' but peculiar persons) a week later. Mysie Walsh's death, symbolising the sacrifice of female sexuality as a scapegoat for patriarchy, becomes a fictional turning point, because her tragedy foreshadows the young Janie's entrance into sexuality as she leaves the Lane.

Although the slum Lane accommodates poverty-stricken, variously crippled and drunken characters, it is seen as 'home and wonderful' (86) by Janie. Annie Frigg suffuses a world with imagination and promises Janie exotic presents that never materialise. The ballad lovers, such as Poll Pyke, Battleaxe, and the Duchess, seem

lively, encouraging words of magic for Janie. This accounts for Janie's love for the tinker, Beulah, who along with the other tinkers had 'the magical facility of rolling far-sounding places round their tongues' (46). Another crucial mother-like figure is Janie's grandmother. Kesson makes it clear that though Janie's grandfather never came to terms with her illegitimacy, refusing even to speak to her, her grandmother was a supportive figure for the young Kesson and her mother.⁴⁶ In another autobiographical short story, Kesson recalls becoming jealous of her cousin's expensive, bright shoes, and hearing her grandmother's enlightening words: 'Sorrow be on shoes. The lark needs no shoes to climb to heaven'.⁴⁷ In *The White Bird Passes*, Janie's grandmother always welcomes Janie's visit, while her grandfather's 'clock gasping the seconds over and past' (119). These mother-like figures contribute to our understanding of Janie's vulnerable position on the edge of a constrained social structure.

Kesson proposes a key word to describe these suppressed and unfitting characters in their living circumstances:

Nor had she [Janie] outgrown her affinity with what Grandmother would have called 'Ne'er do weels,' the Lane 'Riff Raff', and Skeyne 'Ootlins'. Skeyne's word was the best word. The most accurately descriptive. Ootlins. Queer folk who were 'oot' and who, perversely enough, never had any desire to be 'in'. (118)

The Aberdeenshire word 'ootlin' best characterises those people who are cast into the world in which they 'don't fit'.⁴⁸ These alternative mothers, like Janie, cannot be 'fleshed' into their strictly demarcated world, but neither can they escape from the universe into which they are cast. Situated behind the High Street, the Lane epitomises the social order. It represents that which must be controlled by masculine

⁴⁶ Murray, Isobel. *Jessie Kesson: Writing Her Life*. (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2000), p. 29.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38. A story of Kesson's *Where the Apple Ripens*.

⁴⁸ Kesson also indicates the meaning of the word in an interview with Murray and Tait. See 'The Sma' Perfect: Jessie Kesson'. *Scottish Writers Talking*. Ed. Isobel Murray. (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press, 1996), pp. 55-83 (58).

characters of authority, such as the Cruelty Inspector, the Sanitary Man and the Free Boot Man. It symbolises a world politically censored and strictly policed by outside male characters; however, its internal preoccupations are with food, sexuality, fighting, games and survival: all those commercial activities in which women are often the weaker or exploited sex. The image of an intractable human body has been foregrounded through a depiction of the confining male characters and the insubordinate Lady's Lane.

When mill workers come clattering up the Lane, its 'Ladies' are readily dispossessed:

The Duchess and her coterie diminished on Thursday night, leaning against the causeway with silent disapproval while the Lane's up-and-coming race held the cobbles and, even more galling, held them in an idiom to her Grace; flaunting overmuch of that tin jewellery from woolworth's, that new store, Nothing Over Sixpence, that had just opened in High Street . . . (16)

These newcomers' live in a world of labour and consumption, earning money in the mill, spending it in stores, and drawing divisions between work and pleasure. By invading the Lane, these newcomers displace the pleasure of the lane from Lady's Lane itself, and replace it with the pleasures of economic activity (the pleasure of earning and spending). It remains a scene of spoiling previous spontaneous human delight. Later, when leaving Morayshire for Aberdeenshire (moving from a populous city slum to a less populous agricultural village), Janie still cannot escape the world of labour where economic pleasure triumphs over human delight. Janie's home at the orphanage is still graded by tasks, and the children are ranked according to the governors' pleasure: the youngest newcomer has to sweep leaves in the yard, and then moves up to cleaning boots. Janie, at the end of the novel, obtains the pleasant job of delivering milk. These institutions deprive women of their maternal joy while controlling the relationship between work and pleasure. At the end of the novel, we

are shown Janie's body awakening under its own exposure to the glances and desires of the men around her—the ultimate distinction between (female) identity of gender and (male) pleasure of desire.

3.4 *Landscaping Abjection*

These two novels exemplify striking interactions between female Scottish characters with their surroundings, including both rural settings and distinctive cultures. The two literary works achieve an ironic undertone through the tragic resolution of difficult themes: Janet's death in *O Caledonia* and Janie's melancholic lament as an 'ootlin' (or social outsider) in *The White Bird Passes*. Both works outline a retrogressive journey through which the female fantasy of romantic love conceals a desire to escape from patriarchal society. In neither case, however, can the woman prevent herself from ending up the victim of patriarchal society. This ironic undertone is hard-won and usually involves suffering: it is not the outcome that either protagonist desires, but is instead a resolution that promises readers a new and enriched understanding of the female protagonist's mental state. This facility for resolution reflects the fact that these two twentieth-century novelists define themselves in terms of their position as women (a larger and more inclusive category than nationality), and that they devote themselves to finding psychological reality and to *overcoming* the problems they face in a society that seems in many ways to discriminate against women.

3.4.1 *Mourning the Desolation of Landscape*

The landscape in *O Caledonia* appears romantic but savage, and forms an opposition to the artificiality of human cultivation:

Winter descended on the glen; in mid-October came the first thin fall of snow, gone an hour later in the wet wind. The deer ventured down from the hills at dusk, tawny owls shrieked as they hunted through the darkness and shooting stars fled across the night sky. (*O Caledonia*, 52)

Barker mocks this scene, with its animals howling in the dark winter night as a grim but obligatory repression of a bleakly unforgiving Calvinist culture. Caledonia evokes ‘Sunday afternoon tea in the cold parlours of outlying crofts, where the Bible was open beside a ticking clock and rock buns were assembled on snowy doilies, malignly aglitter with the menace of carbonised currants’ (3). The clock’s regular ticking and the rock buns’ presumed position on the white dollies both symbolise the orderliness of a regimented life which regulates the routines of getting up at the same time everyday and of going to church every Sunday. This orderliness stands opposed to the wild outdoors and to the passion of the feminine. The demonic animal howling prevails on the snowy white land, and in the windy night epitomises an imprisoned spirit’s desire for emancipation. The terrifying power from the demonic animals lurking in the white landscape outside corresponds to the vengeful power from the sensitive adolescent sitting in the religion’s rigidly repressing tea room inside. It is worthy to note that a significant contribution to the effect of abjection as made by Kristeva, is her call to be attentive to the abject or demonic potential of the feminine, a potential which the symbolic is unable to completely repress though it should seek its co-existence.⁴⁹ In other words, the co-existence of the demonic potential *and* the feminine is required when the subject confronts what has been suppressed. While Janie identifies her power for revenge with the potentially subverting force of the demonic animals outside the house, the landscape atmosphere invigorates the ‘lonely

⁴⁹ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. Trans. Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 63.

figures driven by passion and savagery' (47).

While the name of Janet's home, 'Auchnasaugh', means 'the field of sighing' (32), Janet's Nanny, who personifies the Calvinist culture, sucks 'a vengeful Pandrop' (7) with her hat spiked with hatpins (8). Unlike her Nanny, Janet, drawn to the 'gaunt place' Auchnasaugh with its moaning winds (32), its 'dim and vaulting hall' and its 'Gothic arch' (1), favours the 'holy splendour of all the purples' (9) and decorates her bedroom with 'lengths of purple taffeta which she would nail to her walls as a start to redesigning the room in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe' (136). The Gothic atmosphere increases although Janet's adopted jackdaw, Claws, who is installed in a doll's house, fails to repeat 'Never more' (136) like Poe's Raven, and instead learns from her brother Francis to say 'Never mind' (145). The extremities represented by those universes experienced by Janet and her nanny deepen the gap between freedom and restriction in the symbolic order of Calvinist society.

Through an overt reframing of the Gothic, *O Caledonia* criticises the literary mode of Gothic that aims to reveal the psychic truth of threatened or violated objects. Barker's concern with patriarchal power structures and with the instability of female identity invites a mixed response by readers to Janet's death. Readers may react through feminist voices with a 'great tide of anger' (69), as Janet does to Raymond's sexual assault: 'How dared he . . . All her dreams and yearnings for high romance . . . pitted against his miserable filthy mind' (69). However, the novel evokes a deeper concern for the female victim's rejection of her socially subjugated gender role and isolation from her community. Janet, desiring in childhood to be either a princess (11) or Snow White (17), and intending in any event to be different from her female peers, seems too individualistic as she isolates and distinguishes herself from others. Barker employs the third-person narrative with shifting perspectives in order to alert her readers to keep their distance. Janet mistakenly believes that 'she [can] control her

destiny' because 'the gods whom [she] had chosen played tricks on mortals for their pleasure' (135). Barker ironically asks readers, using Janet's tone: should we feel 'pity like a naked newborn babe' (108)? The answer remains unsettling as Janet's tragedy and Barker's playful, shifting tones, mix together throughout the novel.

Jennie Rubio proposes a relationship between the abject self and the landscape, commenting: 'The abject self—what the subject represses for its identity—is often projected on to the landscape, which can then take on a dangerous, demonic energy'.⁵⁰ In *O Caledonia*, Janet rejects a Calvinism that mortifies the notion of self. She thinks of the story of Lorna Doone's father who was killed by riding intrepidly over a cliff:

There seemed no place for gallantry or romance among Calvinists. They would say that he should have looked where he was going. Clearly he had not been one of the Elect who were distinguished by perseverance or grim stoicism, and were offered secret divine assistance. (90)

Identifying herself with this dauntless riding, Janet constructs her self-image based on the denial of the body. Hers is a drive towards a spiritual dimension based on energetic but demonic power. She escapes the destiny of an ideal virgin by yearning for a demonic, powerful passion. Her rejection of the female body, however, does not substantially block out her self's imagined Other (her socially subjugated body).

Learning about sexuality, for instance, Janet is appalled:

What a disgrace. It was lucky that she had never had any intention of having babies; now she would certainly never marry either. She would live out her days at Auchnasaugh . . . until that time when she might become ethereal, pure spirit untainted by the woes of the flesh . . . (59-60)

Even literary reading cannot ensure Janet's identity because reading penetrates both her physical and psychological boundaries: reading Tiresias's 'description of fat floating in the blood of sacrificial beasts' causes her 'to vomit hugely across the room' (126). Janet's literary distraction makes her unconsciously reject the movement into

⁵⁰ Rubio, Jennie. "'Escaping her Carapace': Calvinism and the Body in Alice Munro and Elspeth Barker". *Scottlands*. 2.1 (1995): 74-87, p. 78.

womanhood.

Besides writing the distortion of female mentality as induced by Calvinist culture, Barker also invites mixed responses to Caledonia. Withholding absolute judgment, Barker incorporates an ironic tone into her portrayal of a history-haunted region, with an allusion to ancient violence and to the Scottish play, *Macbeth* (61). The novel is over-shadowed by World War Two and presents an anti-war motif that features physically and mentally damaged exiles. Vera is the most obviously satirised character by Barker: her headscarf is 'printed with the flags of the allied nations', bearing 'the slogan "Into Battle" many times repeated' (53). In sharp contrast to Vera's worldly sophistication, Janet's knowledge of the Holocaust and the destruction caused by the atomic bomb (107) suffuses her perception of her world with animal suffering: 'Anger rose in her and merged with her grief, confusing her utterly. She had had enough, she could not cope' (109). Depression is also evidenced through the suicide-like act of Janet's pet jackdaw and through her family's dying cockatoo: the jackdaw killed himself 'like a tiny kamikaze pilot' (2) and the cockatoo's hovered 'like the paraclete' (80). All of these suggest a psychological resistance to a religious tradition, to an exhausting family, and to a blind nation at a certain age.

Images of the body recur throughout the novel, haunting Janet with sexuality. To Janet's distress, her own body cannot be contained while her sister, Flora, seems 'self-contained' (27). Janet vomits in cars, loses parts of her clothes, and her hair grows 'wider and frizzier, escaping from its pigtails, tangling in everything it touched' (27). She refuses to speak of the body (the narrative discussion of the body in the novel are in the third-person), and she seeks to defend her subject boundaries. She constantly recognises symbols of her sexual obliteration. She learns to ignore the sea, for instance, against which people 'lost their identity, were no more than pebbles, part of the sea's scheme' (88). The sea here symbolises both a loss of self as well as

Calvinist predestination. She recalls how four students drowned after stealing a boat: the minister reminded them of the 'words of Knox': 'the same justice remaineth in God' to punish 'thee, Scotland, and thee, Edinburgh' that punished 'the land of Judah and the city of Jerusalem' (89).

While remarking on the ambiguity of abjection, Kristeva suggests the following:

Confronting the foreigner whom I reject and with whom at the same time I identify, I lose my boundaries, I no longer have a container, the memory of experiences when I had been abandoned overwhelms me, I lose my composure, I feel "lost", "indistinct", "hazy".⁵¹

What is jettisoned, therefore, is precisely what appears to disturb the alienating subject. A recurring word in the novel can affirm the phenomena of Janet's abjection of her own female body. The novel begins with the description of a stained glass window at Auchnasaugh, and therein depicts a bird whose breast is 'transfixed' by an arrow (1). The word 'transfixed' with the meaning of 'piercing through' conceals the contradiction in Janet's fighting and desiring. She is fearful of breaking her bodily boundaries, either sexually or spiritually, and fixes her self-image in nature and in any literary scripts extolling it. However, her transfixion does not liberate her imprisonment, but instead turns as an ending to her fate. Acknowledging human impotence after she has accidentally 'transfixed' a toad on a pitchfork, Janet conceives that there is no pity in the world: 'A bleeding heart could only bleed and bleed. It seemed to her then that the nature of Caledonia was a pitiless nature and her own was no better' (109). Janet's death is a literal transfixion that blows her finally dis-integrated spirit 'far north of love or grief' (152) and that shakes her subject boundary.

3.4.2 *Projecting Fantasies into Landscape*

⁵¹ Kristeva, Julia. *Strangers to Ourselves*. Trans. Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 187.

The maternal relationship is as problematic for Janie in *The White Bird Passes* as it is for Janet in *O Caledonia*. Although the female protagonists in both novels try to repel the social restrictions placed upon women, they are quite different in their method of secluding themselves from symbolic fetters. While Janet in *O Caledonia* spontaneously laments the desolation of landscape, Janie in *The White Bird Passes* searches for lost maternal love by projecting fantasies onto the landscape.

Lost maternal love is the most activating motor to drive Janie's fantasies and melancholy. Liza is figured as enigmatic and less reliable in her moods and fancies than any other women in the Lady's Lane. Janie's sense of maternal love is often insecure. Janie's memory of Liza is of fragments:

If Janie had been suddenly stricken with blindness she would have had a perpetual picture of her Mother in her memory. Not a photograph. Her mother had so many faces. But a hundred little images. Each of which was some part of her Mother. And her Mother some part of each.

(*The White Bird Passes*, 22)

Because her illegitimate child has been born into a respectable rural family, Liza has been cast out of her family. This remains an area of tension for young Janie because Liza makes a living for them by exploiting her sexuality. Her sense of insecurity makes Janie desire a protective figure like her friend Gertie's father. She therefore creates a dead father out of her imagination: 'Gertie didn't know what it was to sneek the door and hide under the bed when they came. Her Dad was there to attack the attacker, shouting right down the Lane after him . . .' (39). She longs for a strong father who not only loves the tin whistle but who also possesses power. She fantasises that the school Headmaster reveals himself to be her father and surprises the rest of her imagined class. In Kesson's literary world, however, there exists, even on a personal level, no such figure to play this role; all Janie encounters are men of

authority—the Cruelty Man, the Sanitary Man and the Free Boot Man. Together, these male figures dominate the Lane and form a ruling world over the human community in which Scottish songs and tales vibrate.

When an ill Liza comes to the Orphanage to try and free Janie to care for her, she does not present herself attractively. Janie cannot find any words to tell her mother that she loves her, but leaves the reader in no doubt using vivid memories tinged with imagination:

All the things I know, she taught me, God. The good things, I mean. She could make the cherry trees bloom above Dean's Ford, even when it was winter. Hidden birds betrayed their names the instant she heard their song. She gave the nameless little rivers high hill sources and deep sea endings. She put a singing deal in Loch Na Boune and a lament on the long, lonely winds. She saw a legend in the canna flowers and a plough amongst the stars. And the times in the Lane never really mattered, because of the good times away from it. And I would myself be blind now, if she had never lent me her eyes. (129)

Kesson considers that in order to make a passage into the symbolic order and into a world which obeys conventional gender roles, there must exist a recognition of patriarchal power.⁵² Nevertheless, this recognition is never fully fulfilled in *The White Bird Passes*. Janie resists institutional patriarchy in the form of imagination occupies until the time she meets 'the Mannie', who helps run the orphanage. Recalling that Mannie 'hovered on the fringe of Orphanage life' (134), Janie obtains her musical experience: Mannie tries to teach Janie that she might find it 'easier to work your thinking in with your other jobbies' (137). Nevertheless, even this important figure of male mildness, a figure associated with both nature and with outdoor activities, plays little part in directing her future apart from alerting her to adult sexuality. From the slum Lane to the orphanage Skene, Janie's awareness of

⁵² Norquay, Glenda. 'Borderlines: Jessie Kesson's *The White Bird Passes*'. *Scottish Women's Fiction, 1920s to 1960s: Journeys into Being*. Eds. Carol Anderson and Aileen Christianson. (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 122-133 (125).

different worlds, each one carrying its own set of hierarchal structures and its own peculiarities, makes Janie remain resistant to patriarchal authority.

Situated economically and socially on the edges of society, Janie is more at ease in the world than her mother, although her rich imagination conceals an attempt to remain separated from authority. It is the marginality of Beulah's world of the Green where fairs, travellers, and tinkers deviate from the authority of social order, which Janie longs to be part of it:

The Green had its own social scale. Lord John Sanger's circus was the cream of its aristocracy. When the circus arrived, the chair-o-planes, the Strong Man, the coconut stalls, withdrew from the center of the Green and huddled themselves away in a more remote direction, like younger sons knowing their proper place but still dependent. When winter came and the last circus elephant had trumpeted its way to the station, and the show's last caravan rumbled along the North Road, leaving only faded, brown circles on the Green's grass to prove that they had ever been there at all, the tinkers, the third and last grade of the Green's society, took over. (45-46)

This world of shifting hierarchies provides the confusion of categories and the blurring of boundaries. It is Beulah, a tinker who lives on the Green, whom Janie identifies as a role model. Beulah's poaching, her trading of rags, and her memory of past markets and fairs open up a peripheral but highly inspiring world which stands opposed to the Lane's institutional world. Although she has never been beyond the Lane through her own imagination, Janie, in her close companionship with Beulah, finally imagines herself to be a real tinker someday, a real outsider to the institutional order.

Norquay suggests that the novel's narrative strategy 'works through a series of juxtaposed peripheral worlds whose hierarchies both imitate and undermine the authority of social order'.⁵³ Kesson skillfully uses the recognition of conventional

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

elements to subvert conventional roles. For instance, when Janie and her mother leave the authority of the Lane and end up spending the night in the Diddle Duddle, Janie is attracted by its energy and by its variety of characters. Here they encounter a man with no legs but with a 'great, black hairy grin' (101); Blind Jimmy is a singer {but 'a bit too free with his hands the moment he gets within an inch of a woman' (103)} and a poacher and a fortune teller. The combination of bodily distortion, sexuality, and law-breaking frightens her mother back into the 'shelter' of authority, while—in quite an opposite manner—it revitalises Janie's imagination. Later, Janie encourages a friend in the children's home to imagine figures of authority without their clothes, desiring to subvert their power.

Isobel Murray writes about the success of *The White Bird Passes*, commenting that:

the literary tact which encourages the reader to sense and share feelings that are not spelled out, and to be aware always of emotional depths that are the more powerful for being unplumbed.⁵⁴

What has not been spelled out in the novel is attributed to the emotional disturbance of Janie's abjection of maternal space and female body. By making the central character's journey towards the central social order, Kesson does not present a conventional *bildungsroman*, but instead illustrates an 'ootlin' when Janie is diagnosed with a disintegration of personality by the people in orphanage. We may note Janie's divisions, for example, when Mrs. Thane points to the contradictions she finds in Janie and explains them to the Trustees:

She's a puzzle. She can be crude and knowing as they come. And, at the same time, she's less sophisticated and more sensitive than any of other children, who haven't had such a deplorable background. (149)

Her constrained circumstances, as both a child and a girl, alert the readers to another

⁵⁴ Murray, Isobel. 'Jessie Kesson'. *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*. Eds. Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 481-493 (487).

dimension of the narrative—the half self-made border line between the different worlds of men and nature.

Conclusion

Barker's and Kesson's central female characters dream themselves into other worlds because they are dissatisfied with their own; their dreaming, however, is only one aspect of the central problem that both novelists confront. Their society offers them no human activity that will supply spontaneous joy and creativity. In such a society, the child who possesses imagination finds little to feed on. Without sustenance, their imagination becomes wild; otherwise, by rejecting imagination, they will die. These heroines use their imaginations and identify themselves with the dark but vital power of the landscape in order to escape from, or to ignore, uncongenial reality. Because they can conceive of a different world intensely, they can live more comfortably in the imagined world than in the real one.

Their works operate as an analysis of Scotland's self-perception and psychological conditioning at a level that does not succumb to mere documentation of the twentieth-century urban world. Their portrayals of human nature are sufficiently divorced from the centre of urban life so as to become 'microcosms' of the country as a whole, miniatures of a human condition that is not defined by the contingent actualities of Scotland's 'civilised' condition. The demonic force of feminine aspiration and desire stands opposed to the subjugated function of the female body as a reproductive medium in the symbolic (patriarchal) world. In these two novels, we can discern that nothing is more apt to challenge *and then to* invigorate native traditions than sudden historical change (in this case, the encroaching force of

civilisation after two world wars) and the necessity to fight for female dignity (human nature as lost wholeness). In this respect, north-eastern Scotland serves to represent the Scottish wilderness and its marginalised relationship to civilisation, signifying both the ambivalence of marginality—its vibrancy and tenacity—as well as its limits and problems.

Chapter Four

Escaping (En)Closure

Soon Grandfather and the uncles would go out to Laverock Wood with their horses, leaving a legacy of freedom behind them. Freedom to explore the milk house, dark and cool, with its great stone slabs, its bows of yellow cream, basins of brown hens' eggs and green ducks' eggs, its pale, shining rhubarb laid out on green leaves; its smell of an imprisoned summer, grass and clover and cold well water.

The White Bird Passes, 65

The preceding chapter draws attention to the ways in which Barker and Kesson present the mentality of their female characters through a portrayal of their interactions with and isolations from various social institutions. I will now demonstrate the ways by which the authors appropriate certain forms of oral literature, particularly the ballad tradition as it illustrates that these female protagonists have rejected an image of themselves perpetuated by patriarchy: the image of an idealised virgin as invented by men but then internalised by women. By using ballads to define the mental state of their female protagonists, these two writers effectively call for the recognition of what constitutes reality: the emotions of rejection and of unconscious internalisation—in short, of the two-sidedness of things. When discussing the difference between one's oral statements about life and one's written fiction, Rosalind Brackenbury indicates that, 'just as our actions and decisions create our literature, so in turn we are recreated by that literature, given back a new reflection of ourselves in the portraits of other women, united by what we perceive we have in common'.¹ This difference between life and literature can be specifically discerned through each author's intentional inclusion of ballad quotations: these textual quotations show each

¹ Brackenbury, Rosalind. 'Women and Fiction: How We Present Ourselves and Others'. *Cenchrastus* (1984): 12-14. p. 12.

author's desire that attention be paid to the mental state of oppressed women.

The ballad tradition of north-eastern Scotland is used in both Barker's *O Caledonia* and in Kesson's *The White Bird Passes*. By this inclusion, each author recognises the ballads characteristic to certain geographical locations while acknowledging that the ballad tradition can be adopted and reinterpreted by individuals. I plan to explore each author's poetic register of balladic language in order to account for both the female protagonist's abjection of patriarchal ideal of virginity and for the mental contradictions brought about by this abjection. I will demonstrate this mental contradiction by appealing to a linguistic and grammatical analysis of balladic language as presented in the composite of ballad fragments. Mary Orr suggests that textual quotation offers a literary device, 'an authority, or a complex shorthand which also counters authenticating functions by means of parody, counter-example or ironic questioning'.² Quotation, a variant of intertextuality, therefore invites both contextual interpretations and criticisms of oral literature.

Based on a gesture of locating traditional oral literature in the context of twentieth-century culture, the interpretation of oral literary motifs may change from the linguistic denotative to the contextually connotative. I propose that Barker's and Kesson's uses of direct and indirect quotations, taken from traditional Scottish ballads and from children's rhymes, provides an ironic view of hegemonic society in their fictional depiction of social and cultural conditions after two World Wars. They do this in order to discredit the view that balladry emerges only as a realistic inscription of folk life: their method of combining balladic fragments does not record the life of the character, but rather reflects the character's psychic attitude toward his/her own life. Barker's and Kesson's quotations of ballads particularly marks their own Scottish

² Orr, Mary. *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), pp. 130-151 (130).

identification and distinctiveness. On the one hand, Barker and Kesson praise the Scottish way of life and Scottish attitudes and values; on the other hand, the authors launch a critical perspective on the limitation of these same attitudes and values. The North-east is communicated to readers through the lens of ‘cultural ambivalence’³, existing as it does in the tension between cultural uniqueness and a criticism of its own limitations. An ambivalence towards either cultural identification or renunciation becomes a feature of north-eastern Scottish balladry, particularly when a standing convention needs to be re-examined. This feature of north-eastern ballads, self-styling and self-mocking, adds a critical perspective to a regional literature. The two authors celebrate regional balladic voices while satirising them by positioning them in different contexts. Although the two novels indeed portray those who are trying to invest dignity into a difficult life with dignity (with a child’s intensity of magic making, and her spontaneous response to sensation, music, smells, and local life), what the novels appear to focus upon are the psychological effects of specific social conventions on the individual. In both novels, the excitement and vividness of childhood as described by each author, encourages readers to forget the hard facts. This is evidenced through the fantastic as it appears in the balladic chants of the protagonists and in the way that both writers try to soften the perceived reality at the end of their novels.

In order to prove the intentionally blurred lines of balladic genre (whether realistic description, or ironic fantasy), I shall in the first section (4.1) review the role of women in Scottish oral traditions, as well as how the childhood motif changes and

³ Murison’s phrase (193). He claims that Scottish ballads, particularly those characteristic of north-eastern origins, on the one hand preserve a regional tradition, but on the other hand often fall into ‘stock-in-trade’. He explains that ‘in modern jargon, there is a lack of empathy between the creator and the created’. Murison, David. ‘Appendix: Northeast Scots as a Literary Language’. *Grampian Hairst: an anthology of Northeast prose*. Eds. William Donaldson and Douglas Young. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1981), pp. 187-195.

operates. My contention is that realist elements in oral literature cannot fully demonstrate the complexity of their worlds. Instead, a sense of the real is achieved entirely by the fact that the characters seem to have ‘lives’ independent of cultural context, and that both the audience and the reader share codes of the characters’ psychic ‘life’ through the linguistic reading of oral literature’s language as effected in different cultural contexts. This is one of the characteristics of the oral tradition as it changes in various historical moments. The second section (4.2) contributes to an analysis of the connection between Kristeva’s theoretical view of intertextuality and the duality of oral literature. I shall explain why Kristeva’s theoretical assumption of another voice residing in the semiotic (style) drive in the symbolic (lexical) language shares an affinity with the inherent doubleness embedded in oral tradition. In the third section (4.3), I shall analyse the semiotic disposition⁴ of oral literature’s language to show its semiotic (bodily) drive in these two novels.

I propose that an authorial awareness of *closure* in their lives of women—women trapped in a patriarchal society—is articulated by locating balladic fragments and the fragments of childhood rhymes in symbolic (lexical), cultural contexts. The effect of these two novels resides in the fact that the semiotic dimension (or the style) of oral literary language calls the reader’s attention to *enclosure* as created by the protagonists themselves. While examining particular historical ages after two World Wars, the two authors appropriate both ballads and childhood rhymes in order to invoke the reader’s awareness of each character’s self-enclosure.

4.1 The Scottish Oral Tradition, Women and Gender

⁴ In Kristeva’s view of intertextuality, it refers to the generative grammar or speech acts in genotext. It is the emergence of the semiotic in the symbolic, or the genotext in the phenotext, such as rhythm, ambiguity and over-symbolicity, the switches and multiple locutionary position. See Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language* (1980), and *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984).

Ballads, childhood rhymes, and folk songs as adapted from literary materials and myth, are all variants of oral literature. Let us first look at interpretative alternatives in the ballad's oral tradition so that we can acknowledge the role that the ballad, as a largely artistic form of oral literature, plays as a cultural milieu for asserting Scotland's unique national literature. When discussing the ballad as a combination of homogenous cultural identity and diverse individuality, David Atkinson proposes three dimensions of traditional balladry: critical and aesthetic appreciation, historical transmission, and ideological commitment.⁵ He argues that Francis James Child's monumental corpus of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1857) provides scholars with paradigms for studying temporal changes of balladic features, and that singers vary their repertoires with different shades of material that reflect their own artistic instincts.⁶ From the perspective of paradigmatic consultation and artistic innovation, we may then say that, tinged with the historical continuum of the folksong and artistic creation of repertoires, the ballad maker's ideological commitment becomes a direct medium for both historical inheritance and individual artistic innovation. To the extent that artistic creativity grows, the extent of ideological commitment can also be measured. Artistic innovation of the ballad may de-stabilise the ballad maker's ideological commitment either by altering historical inheritance across time or by interrogating cultural expectation in one place. The ballad tradition, in this sense, seems for modern ballad-makers to be diachronically and synchronically unalterable, and remains for the singer a background for negotiation rather than a paradigm for modeling. Atkinson also confirms this function of the ballad tradition by affirming that it is 'located in an individual, conscious,

⁵ Atkinson, David. *The English Traditional Ballad: theory, method, and practice*. (England: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 1-38.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

volitional, affective engagement in a relationship with people, but also with cultural forms, across time'.⁷ Each ballad-maker, writer as well as singer, may negotiate balladic tradition in his/her relationship with cultural expectations and thereby create a personal expression. The balladic tradition in this way may change with reinterpretation (this may be trans-cultural) as each ballad maker's newly created interpretation affords greater scope than preceding expressions.

Atkinson contends that 'tradition is essentially [a] cognitive function of individuals and groups of people situated in time and space', and that 'tradition is a symbolic, rather than a natural, relationship across time (or space); it is characterised by discontinuity as well as by continuity'.⁸ If the ballad tradition essentially changes with the ballad creator's relationship with his/her preceding traditions, we may say then that we observe this relationship through the ways the ballad-maker modifies the preceding thematic traditions by his/her cultural interpretation, because these alterations 'disclose the cultural concerns and cultural statements that inform the long-lived genre'.⁹ This long-lived genre (the ballad itself) carries inherent cultural statements which are revised across time and location. Regarding the ballad's inheritance of traditional themes and his own personal revision of them, Atkinson also confirms that 'the traditional referentiality inherent in ballads at large can be incorporated into localised expressions of tradition'.¹⁰ He also contends that 'traditional referentiality does not *compel* interpretation within its horizon of expectations; rather, it helps map the interpretive options that belong to balladry at large'.¹¹ David Buchan also confirms the view of literary creation of oral composition, indicating that it is significant 'to see oral composition not as a debased or primitive

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

form of written literary composition but as a sometimes sophisticated autonomous method of literary creation'.¹² This 'sophisticated autonomous method of literary creation' resides in the transcultural intertextuality that is specifically seen in the ballads and hymns used in these two novels. This creation lies in the traditional referentiality of 'female topics' (the predicaments of women in a given cultural context), and maps alternative options of interpretation through the ironic employment of traditional manners and styles: personal and societal interactions; and cognitive and affective associations.

We may then ask how women might have been characterised in the ballad tradition and how this characterisation allows possibilities for alternative interpretations through the individual questioning of dominant social values. This is the question on which this chapter focuses as it examines the oral tradition both textually and contextually. As regards the significance of ballads and songs to women, Mary Ellen Brown indicates that women select the genre of ballad in order to illuminate an awareness of gender conditions in society.¹³ If the ballad form reveals women's gendered social experience, we may find that the negative aspects of female life are displayed more often than the positive. The female characters that appear in the many ballads sung by women often appear to be weak, helpless, or evil. Women had a collective interest in crafting ballads that related to the roles women were presumed to play in hegemonic society. How then are these examples positively adapted through modern interpretations of the ballad tradition? Catherine Kerrigan, in her Introduction to *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*, contends that 'the ballad tradition is primarily a women's tradition, what these women were rediscovering

¹² Buchan, David. *The Ballad and the Folk*. (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 1972), p. 55.

¹³ Mary Ellen Brown. 'Old Singing Women and the Canons of Scottish Balladry and Song'. *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*. Eds. Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 44-57 (51).

(however unconsciously) was the female voice of the ballad tradition'.¹⁴ She finds that the themes modern female poets employ, such as the failure of love, the rearing of children, the fear of growing old, can also be found in the traditional ballad. (This thematic representation of women will be illustrated in the following discussion concerning balladic fragments in these novels.) The modern female voices, however, are now confident in the subjects they handle and carry an ability to investigate the psychic truth as presented in traditional ballads with similar themes.¹⁵

The pre-existing codes of the genre are brought into play and different interpretations are created in a conversation between the old and new, the traditional and the innovative. While we investigate the relationships between the work in question and its reinterpretations, it remains the case that the reinterpretation of gendered balladic performance is not quite like any other since gender relationships are often revised and are frequently based upon the ballad's previous status. As regards the purpose behind adapting traditional themes of the gender relationship, Kirsteen McCue argues that while some writers absorbed traditional songs which 'contained invaluable messages from previous generations', most writers grasped those as 'templates which were to be altered and improved in order to educate the present generations'.¹⁶ She asserts that 'under the auspices of this simple and "genuine" form' lie the messages 'which set moral standards and laid down accepted patterns of behaviour'.¹⁷ The old lessons generated new moral visions. As concerns the quotation of traditional ballads in these two novels, we may see that the vivid preoccupation with preceding moral standards and accepted patterns of behaviour are

¹⁴ Kerrigan, Catherine ed. *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*. Gaelic Translation by Meg Bateman. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 1-11 (8).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-11.

¹⁶ McCue, Kirsteen. 'Women and Song 1750-1850'. *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*. Eds. Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 58-70 (67).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

satirised in the form of alternate ego and are embedded in the styles of balladic language. Each author's complication of balladic citations is essentially political, in terms of both thematic and linguistic selection.

As the Scottish ballad's feature resides in the dramatisation of female anxiety over marriage destiny, the loss of virginity, and death, so does the tendency of 'lived' experience substantially develop in other forms of oral literature. Children's rhymes, for instance, deal with images of fear while folk songs borrow chorus dialogues (from noted dramas) that contain images of death. That is to say, the twin fates of marriage and death, or the unlocked destiny of human pleasure and murder, readily pervade the song culture of Scotland. Evidently, we may discern this feature in the poetic pursuits of oral literature in the twentieth century.¹⁸ Particularly Barker's *O Caledonia* and Kesson's *The White Bird Passes* select children's rhymes that deal with images of infanticide; the use of dramatic asides from Shakespeare's work also carry the image of revengeful blood.

We may wonder whether or not these facts—that children's rhymes are intensified with fear of harm and that folk songs are easily associated with the bloody scenes from noted dramas—characterise an 'authentic' Scottishness for oral literature? If the impact of this negative characterisation is constructive, what does this negative inclination bring about? As concerns the relationship between childhood and the formalism of the Scottish ballad, Ann Rowland, taking 'Lamkin' in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* for an example, argues for two purposes behind the Scottish ballad's use of child murder: on the one hand, the horror of infanticide models how the Scottish nation can maintain a critical distance from the violence of the primitive past, and how it can thereby still claim a cultural continuity with the past; on the other hand,

¹⁸ Besides two novels in this chapter, a good example is Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960).

those mothers and nurses who murder their children easily transgress the role of domestic femininity and thereby challenge social restrictions on motherhood.¹⁹ The first perspective exists within a nationalist frame, while the absence of any horror in killing their children exists within a feminist project. We must note here that both purposes enforce the relationship between childhood and Scottish culture; both emphasise the significance of virtue and the preservation of cultural heritage.

We may see the preservation of cultural identity through the image of childhood by deciphering Barker's and Kesson's uses of oral tradition and drama (a kind of oral, musical literature when presented) in their novels. Besides using some well-known balladic fragments, Barker and Kesson also borrow some children's rhymes tinged with innocent sorrow, and some dramatic asides (characterised by revengeful murder) taken from Shakespeare's work. Both authors juxtapose moments of nostalgia with instants of sickening violence during the childhood of the two female protagonists. In their fictions, it is through the female child's recitation of ballads, folk songs, and dramatic asides that readers may discover an artistic touch. Even though the idiomatic dialogue in their surroundings is harsh, the unpalatable facts of cruelty to women can be translated into rhythmically delicate 'narratives' via the quotations from oral literature. These 'narratives', however, are not an overt depiction of spontaneous joy in childhood but are instead an articulation of helplessness as it characterises the young girl's transition from innocence to experience.

4.2 *Dual Reading in the Oral Tradition*

¹⁹ Rowland, Ann Wierda. "'The fause nourice sang': childhood, child murder, and the formalism of the Scottish ballad revival". *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*. Eds. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 225-244 (226-227).

Now that thematic interpretation in oral literature may contextually vary across place and time, we may want to speculate about how the interpretative process operates. The interpretive process is the creation of a dialogue from an intersection of textual surfaces, rather than from the construction of a single point of meaning. This gesture shares an affinity with Kristeva's notion of intertextuality—which she understands as an alter ego embedded in the semiotic (style) drive of symbolic (lexical) language—the two axes of language as defined in the Introduction. The linguistic view of contrasted doubles precisely aligns with the psychological analysis of the creators or performers of oral literature. The ballad's narrator or hymn singer is, like the culture, not the unitary identity of the isolated ego; it is in a continual dialogue with a social self that reveals its own psychological otherness. Exploration of the divided self is not simply an exploration of the expression of culture, but is also an exploration of the disease of those cultural notions by which a self recognises its own involvement with the Other. The self has withdrawn from its relationship with the other into a self-enclosed and self-divisive identity.

The kind of engagement with this self-divisive identity therefore emerges as a critical perspective on Scottish oral tradition. The mapping of the divisive mind of modern women is combined with a fictional experimentation in balladic form and language. Both authors discussed in this chapter are particularly impressive in their creative use of colloquialisms and the Scottish north-eastern landscape. Quotations from ballads and songs are used to elicit particular contextual effects from the protagonist's mental world of action, tension, overwhelming passion, defiant challenge, and desperate fighting; together, these quotes paint what seems a more hostile world than that in which traditional ballads were first known to have appeared. Unfortunately, this world does not bring about a released self but builds up an enclosed self which is psychologically haunted by its repelled Other.

In many ballads, the notions of the self have enforced a sense of ego and have illuminated false unity, such that the ballad narrator becomes an identifying spectator rather than a participant in society. In other words, ballad performers engage in the supernatural apart from the empirical world in order to create imaginary, emotional satisfaction, with a view to redressing the emotional imbalance that surrounds any discomfort resulting from social injustice. This split self, oscillating between the supernatural fantasy and the empirical reality, forms a primary feature in the world of Scottish ballads. Elphinstone indicates that 'Scottish literature not only developed the marriage of the supernatural with a pragmatic realism from the ballads onward, but that it also produced the historical novel, out of a philosophy of history that was fully aware that historical accounts are merely points of view'.²⁰ If balladic fantasy provides different critical perspectives from the more conventional historical accounts of folk-life, then the supernatural celebration of sinister images and the fantastic inversions of feminine human nature must reflectively satirise a Scottish societal emotional imbalance in the mockery of social injustice.

As regards the reductive power of a societal self, Manlove observes that Scottish fantasy often reserves things by a reductive power: 'backward process is often mirrored in a habit [of] turning things upside-down', such as names, opposite selves, and inverted places.²¹ This reductive power involves an examining eye into 'the deepest levels of the spirit', 'rather than a diversion or an escape from the real world'.²² This Scottish balladic fantasy in these two novels accords with a postmodern clinical spirit: the divided self is characterised by the self in relation to its Other and is precisely the result of the self's failure to confront its own Otherness. No

²⁰ Elphinstone, Margaret. 'Contemporary Feminist Fantasy in the Scottish Literary Tradition'. *Tea & Leg-Iron: New Feminist Readings from Scotland*. Ed. Gonda, Caroline. (London: Open Letters, 1992), pp. 45-59 (47).

²¹ Manlove, Colin. *An Anthology of Scottish Fantasy Literature*. (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), p. 14.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18.

longer prepared to play serving-maid to their male counter-parts or play the role of dangerous women, the writers of the two novels arouse in twentieth-century Scottish women, a new awareness for the gender relationship through their mocking play of the defying tones against patriarchy appearing in oral literature's tradition.

4.3 *Defamiliarisation of Oral Literature's Language*

Ballad creators are constantly reinterpreting traditional ballad themes. Thus, we need to continue with an analytical task that aims to delimit the boundaries of the system (what is to be excluded and what, in turn, is to be included; what is the denotative and what, the connotative). I want to demonstrate that the abjection of the ideal of virginity (as expressed in the quoted ballads in these two novels) remains logistically sensible in patriarchal society but ontologically problematic for psychological stability. In the two novels, the codes of this abjection remain in the linguistic styles as the protagonists' hidden emotions as well as the authors' subtextual messages to the readers. These codes provide the emotive function of language and they defamiliarise the language of ballads. As regards linguistic intertexts, Kristeva refers to texts in terms of two axes: a horizontal axis connecting the author and reader of a text, and a vertical axis, which connects the text to other texts.²³ According to Kristeva, uniting these two axes are shared codes: every reading of a text depends on prior codes which constitute the 'structuration' of text (how the structure came into being).²⁴ In the two novels, it is these prior codes of the appropriated ballads that need examination. I contend that the two authors reveal the self-divisive identities of

²³ Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language*. Ed. Leon Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 69.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

their female protagonists through their readings of linguistic structures in the ballad form. They combine balladic fragments in order to applaud the traditional ballad's narrative commitment to the rage of oppressed women and with a view to satirising a verbally cynical but psychologically damaged self. They hold the view that the imprisonment of their female protagonists comes primarily from the unconscious internalisation of abjection and from an intentional indulgence in the ballad's fantastic world. Although the symbolic meaning of texts shows the singer's lamentation of a life *closed* by society, we may observe in balladic language and in children's rhymes that the attitude of the protagonists against the idea of womanhood alienates them to the point of self-*enclosure*.

4.3.1 *Calvinism and Gender Resistance*

Barker's use of metrical rhythms and rhymes, evident in the appropriated fragments from ballads, literary drama, and mythical tales, indicates that there are certain contrasts that reveal Janet's internal struggle (dating from her restricted girlhood to her defiant womanhood) for freedom in a family heavily impacted by Calvinism. In *O Caledonia*, Elspeth Barker demonstrates her narrative skill by blending tragic pathos with black humour, particularly through her ironic mockery of the rigid Calvinist's life. Janet's struggles with encroaching womanhood constitute an ironic and comical reading, despite a dark, underlying sense of doom. This comic reading exists in those selected ballad fragments that together narrate and effectively satirise the protagonist's abjection of a Calvinist culture that prescribes ideal womanhood. This innovative method of appropriating and combining traditional balladic fragments and children's rhymes, aims to reveal the protagonist's hostile tone of maternal abjection as effected in various, highly-pinched oral narratives.

The rigorous Calvinism that surrounds female characters has its counter-point in the seemingly joyful recitation of folk song. Before we analyse how the contents of these folk songs emerges in ironic contrast to the Calvinist context, we must first look at the impact of Calvinist culture on north-eastern Scotland during the period after World War Two. I must note here that the way I am discussing Calvinism has more to do with social response, rather than the actuality of beliefs. Willa Muir in *Living with Ballads* (1965) argues for a traditionally negative view of Calvinism's effect on Scottish culture. In the case of Scottish balladry, she believes that the feminist voices predominate within the fantastic imagination in the ballads before the Calvinist Reformation.²⁵ For Muir, 'the Ballad World was an enemy' to the Calvinist world because Calvinism forbade the fulfillment of certain human needs such as the need for passion and the need for play.²⁶ Although Muir may hold too negative an attitude towards the Calvinist treatment of individual desires, the protesting voices against Calvinist cultural treatment have been authentically expressed in folksongs that reflect the discomforts of individual lives. Thus, the Scottish women's balladic world has been built on the catharsis afforded by the passionate abhorrence of patriarchal maltreatment and has been enacted through imaginative folklore and fantastic legend. This emotional satisfaction from artistic freedom, though far removed from actual life, opposes the emotional constraint of artistic creativity as prescribed by the Calvinist world. For Calvinists, the development of art may threaten the standard of morality, and may thus trigger sin.²⁷

²⁵ Muir, Willa. *Living with Ballads*. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), p. 139.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 139 & 197.

²⁷ Douglas indicates that Calvin did not prohibit any divinely given instinct of arts, but rather considered arts as the given for our comforts. In Scotland during the 16th and 17th century (the prime time of Calvinism), however, there is certainly a notable absence of mysticism in Scottish literature. He asserts that 'to win a livelihood called for endurance and perseverance, it was somehow fitting that Scots should embrace a religious system with an austere code of worship and duty'. In this religious system, people distrust beauty and suspect leisure. This phenomenon still persists in some Scottish remnant churches. See, Douglas, J. D. 'Calvinism's Contribution to Scotland'. *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*. Ed. W. Stanford Reid. (Michigan: The Zondervan Corporation, 1982),

Nevertheless, we may ask if the female voices in pre-Reformation ballad tradition can be entirely curbed by the Calvinist distrust of imagination. If the reinterpretation of the ballad's thematic tradition halts with the change of culture, this culture must be entirely devoid of its opposing force. However, this is not the case for the actual influence of Calvinism on the artistic development of Scotland. In discussing the relationship between art and Calvinism, Norquay claims that although the influence of Calvinism is widely treated as a negative art-denying force, the negative voices of Calvinism paradoxically emphasise the extent of artistic power; they enable a generative power that counters theological thoughts.²⁸ In other words, the oppressive power that is imposed upon artistic creativity becomes a source of artistic inspiration. Ramsay also asserts the effects of this counter-point, indicating that while Calvinist theology prohibited representational art, the artistic impulse was contradictorily nurtured in a contradictory fashion such that 'the architecture and decorative art thereby received an additional stimulus'.²⁹

While Muir holds a negative attitude towards Calvinism's oppression upon artistic freedom, Norquay adopts a more neutral opinion, affirming Calvinism's counter effect in generating artistic creativity. Personally, I would like to take a side-effect view that the more taboos a religious society imposes upon literary or imaginative creativity, the more a social desire for emancipation will then burst out in the achievement of that creativity. We may infer that the restrictive patriarchal institutions in the Calvinist world may give birth to *more* revolutionary female voices through artistic creation in the form of ballads, rather than putting an end to the

pp. 217-237 (231-232).

²⁸ Norquay, Glenda. *Moral Absolutism in the Novels of Robert Louis Stevenson, Robin Jenkins and Muriel Spark*. Ph.D. Thesis. (University of Edinburgh, 1985), p. 432. Norquay mentions that Calvinists, imposing their own ideals of what Scotland should be, expend their social powers of analysis in discussing absences instead of presences within their culture. p. 18.

²⁹ Ramsay, M. P. *Calvin and Art: considered in relation to Scotland*. (Edinburgh & London: The Moray Press, 1938), p. 9.

artistic fertility of this genre. This fact is particularly evident through Scottish balladic fantasy in which ballad singers struggle with a certain set of metaphysical assumptions by alluding to legendary supernatural powers that counter the ‘absence’³⁰ of the Calvinist world. The interrogating spirit towards morality, celebrated by the supernatural in balladry, combats the abiding spirit as is preached by the ‘absence’ (the unknown predestination) of the Calvinist world.

When considering the impact of Calvinism on Scottish writing, what we should attend to is the relationship between religious habitual feelings and their influence on inward experience. Faith is a faculty that is not acquired solely by the self. We should impartially examine what it can do for the welfare of our living environment—for both community and nation. Cairns Craig’s claims that if Scots need a sense of tradition which is essentialist neither in its historical mode, nor in its denial, then ‘this route to a theoretically nonessentialist, intellectual fluid identity’ may emerge as a practice of border crossings in early modern Scottish women’s writing.³¹ Craig’s argument for multiplicity however is criticised by Caroline McCracken-Flesher as an unconscious reduction of a particular culture’s conflicting patterns, those which overemphasises ‘a dynamic between the fearful and the fearsome, those comprising the community and those asserting themselves against it’, ignorant of its engagement with other worlds.³² McCracken-Flesher’s view ignores a universal cultural fact that it is the growth of new regionalist and national concerns corresponding to particular psychological awarenesses that best enliven and characterise national imaginings. The

³⁰ I mean here that ‘the absence’ in Calvinists’ world is the omnipotent God, who forbids human emotional desires, even the desires of creativity of art, in lest that these amoral aesthetic forms may arouse human motives of sin.

³¹ Dunnigan, Sarah M. ‘Undoing the double tress: Scotland, early modern women’s writing, and the location of critical desires’. *Feminist Studies*. (Summer 2003): 299-319 (306).

³² McCracken-Flesher, Caroline. ‘Back to the Scottish future?’ *Novel*. (Summer 2000): 419-423 (420, 422).

identification with and the repudiation of 'fearful selves'³³ constitutes Scottish fictional distinctiveness as seen, for example, in James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). The philosophical apprehension of Calvinism and its counter-voices forms a foundation for a post-structuralist analysis of the modern Scottish novel with a specific focus on 'fearful selves'. In other words, we may say that the contradictory effects of Scottish Calvinism generate suspicions towards coherence in the external world. This causes an individual to fear his/her own desire to defy external rules and internal voices. The self is contradictorily split into two 'fearful selves', and oscillates between a 'masked' reality (the external world) and a 'true' illusion (the internal world).

The appropriated balladic fragments in these two novels are suffused with imaginative creativity and question hegemonic thinking. In Barker's *O Caledonia*, the contrast between Janet's moral code of pagan nobility and the civilised suspicion of the imaginary is particularly apparent. A magical world of savagery fights against the severity of civilisation and the conventional maltreatment of imaginative creativity; a ballad breaks into the text, for example, when the boarding school's education, (suggesting a principle of civilisation), suppresses Janet's passion for balladry:

I leant my back unto an aik
I thought it was a trusty tree,
But first it bowed and then it brake . . . (*O Caledonia*, 48)

The first stanza comes from an old Scottish song, 'Waly, waly, but Love be bonny', which depicts a maiden's distress over her abandonment after she has surrendered her whole being to her lover.³⁴ The 'trusty tree' represents a picture of vegetation and humanity. But this is complicated as it 'brake' after its first 'bow'. The tree looks

³³ It is the motif which underlies Craig's treatment of Scottish fiction as experimental with the problems of form and history. Craig, Cairns. *The Modern Scottish Novel: narrative and the national imagination*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 37-74.

³⁴ Murray, J. Clark. *The Ballads and Songs of Scotland: in view of their influence on the character of the people*. (London: Macmillan And Co., 1874), pp. 62-63.

trustworthy but is in fact untrustworthy; the mockery has been underlined within the ironic contrast between man's promise and woman's easy reliance upon the words. As applied to the social situation of women, a woman's destiny is controlled by a man's 'bowing' and 'braking' of love. This natural reference underlies Barker's poignant call for attention to the deep pathos of female passive position. Positioned in a distinct social class within a disapproving Calvinist society, Janet is often disturbed by her the pursuit and mockery of her male peers. This song mirrors Janet's emotional whirl. Barker then borrows an excerpt from 'Twa Corbies'³⁵, in order to foreshadow Janet's motive for conspiring to murder in a night void of light.

Ye'll set upon his white hausbane
And I'll peck out his bonny blue e'en (48)

'White' and 'blue' are contrasting colours that signify innocent joy and gloomy groans. The feeling of anger deepens:

I hacked him in pieces sma' (48)

This refers to 'Fair Helen of Kirconnell' in Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*³⁶, and involves a woman falling a victim in the vengeful wars between two male lovers. Janet's vengeful mood here climaxes when she is bothered by her male peers.

It was mirk mirk night
There was nae starlight
We waded through red blood to the knee
For all the blood that's shed on earth
Runs through the springs of that country. (48)

The possessive passion of women and the cowardly character of men climaxes in the fourth stanza with an excerpt from 'Thomas the Rhymer'³⁷; this alludes to how Thomas becomes enthralled by the Fairy Queen for seven years after he kisses her and gives himself to be the Queen's passive and helpless captive. The metaphor of

³⁵ Lyle, Emily, ed. *Scottish Ballads*. (Edinburgh: Canongate Press, 1994), p. 263.

³⁶ Scott, Walter, collected. *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. (London: Ward, Lock, & Co., Warwick House, 1883). pp. 290-292 (292).

³⁷ Lyle, Emily, ed. *Scottish Ballads*. (Edinburgh: Canongate Press, 1994), p. 134.

blooded earth is emphasised through alliteration: a 'mirk mirk' night without starlight. The springs that contain the energetic power of life are ruined by the blood spilt on the earth.

Last night I dreamed a dreary dream
Beyond the Isle of Skye
I saw a dead man win a fight
And I think that man was I . . . (48)

The shift in the fifth stanza, which includes an excerpt from the ballad 'Battle of Otterbourne'³⁸, drives the passion for Scottish victory into the heroic vanity of triumph. Although the speaker imagines winning the battle for life 'beyond the Isle of Skye', it is actually the case that the fighter, after victory, has sacrificed his life for afterlife. The alliteration of 'dreamed a dreary dream' stresses the obscure borderline between life and death: the victory of the battle must be realised by death, by the afterlife's world.

This tragic passion for sacrifice echoes Janet's initial desire for the courage to challenge destiny: 'Chewing gum, chewing gum sent me to my grave. / My mother told me not to, but I disobeyed' (1). The humorous but sarcastic repetition of 'chewing gum, chewing gum' again arouses her defying spirit to defeat danger, even at the price of life. The vernacular expression of this children's rhyme maintains a naïve passion as well as the satirical violation of life rules.

Positioned in the tension between an unfettered highland life and a disciplined lowland schooling, the protagonist is torn between the lands of high romance and the bleak world of education, of making do and of commerce. An intense involvement with repressive lowland schooling and gender-discriminatory highland life makes Janet a social outcast from the human world. Janet recognises herself as an outsider and thus indulges herself in the fantasy of hearing a mermaid's voice on the sea wind:

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 29.

Lady, weeping at the crossroads
 Would you meet your love
 In the twilight with his greyhounds
 And his hawk on his glove? (55)

This is a folk song imitating the motif associated with that of 'Sir Patrick Spens'. It reveals a maiden's yearning for but love also warns against any love that is too ready to trust in men.³⁹ Even when wandering 'at the crossroads' and hoping for a real lover to emerge from 'the twilight' of nature, Janet is still suspicious of the lover's 'greyhounds' and of the 'his hawk on his glove'. The metrical rhyming of 'crossroads' and 'greyhounds' opposes that of 'love' and 'glove', deepening the sense of Janet's insecurity. The assonance of 'hawk' and 'glove', suggestive of hunting, warns the readers of the danger lurking under the sweet gift of love.

Janet then imagines a mermaid comforting her about her own incompatibility with society:

Then up rose the mermaiden
 Wi' a comb and glass in her hand
 Here's a health to you my merrie young men
 For you never will see dry land. (55)

Associated with the broken ship on the stormy sea of 'Sir Patrick Spens' again⁴⁰, Janet identifies herself with the mermaid in terms of their half-human nature. Janet's mirror-like alter ego precisely symbolises her internal alienation from the world. Nature, in this sense, does not serve as a shelter into which she can escape, but instead projects itself onto her imagination as an active listener for the inner conversation she holds with herself. The pun of 'dry land' refers to Janet's external discriminating world and also to her internal closed world. For Janet, the matter of Spring in this dry land carries with it a pang of longing, because she feels that this season brings out the worst in women due to the deterioration of love:

³⁹ Lyle, Emily, ed. *Scottish Ballads*. (Edinburgh: Canongate Press, 1994), pp. 53-54.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king;
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring. (98)

This excerpt from Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* reveals the worsening qualities of Spring, textually implying the singer's gradual distrust of love. As a form of pentameter, the sound structure of this couplet presents a mirthful celebration of the season. The alliteration of 'sweet spring' stresses the mirth of a pleasant season, while the assonance of 'thing' and 'ring' implies dancing in a doomed cycle of destiny. However, the tone quickly changes as Janet thinks with grim satisfaction:

It was a lover and his lass
With a hey and a ho and ney nonny no . . .

And accompanied by:

When birds do sing hey ding a dong ding . . . (99)

This is a sort of generic ballad in Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*, and is adopted by Matthew Harris in his fourteen *Shakespeare Songs*.⁴¹ The song in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* takes place when the figure of Second Page implies that lovers, just like two gipsies on a horse, must catch pleasure in the moment, as there is nothing more important in the world. Barker's irony in using Shakespeare is that even the gentle idyll of young love in the spring was afflicted, rather than the mirthful and gross atmosphere in Shakespeare's comedy. Readers might think that it is too far-fetched to suggest Barker's use of a careless lyric singer; this device, however, permits emotional leaps through metrical effect. The literary reference, with alliteration of 'lover' and 'lass', of 'hey' and 'ho', of 'nonny no', of 'ding, dong ding', ruins the metrical harmony presented in the preceding couplet, and stresses the sense of the fragile relationship of love even in love's heyday, the prime of life. This breaking of

⁴¹ http://www.chicagoacappella.org/about_us/prg-shakespeare.htm pp. 1-14 (3). March 31th, 2005. Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. Act V, Scene III. From *The Works of Shakespeare*. Vol. II. Part 10. Ed. W. E. Henley. (Printed at Edinburgh for London: Grant Richards, 1901), p. 362.

an established pattern of metrical lines aims to foreground a disruptive female voice in the text: a presumed anticipation and thereby internal frustration, and then repudiation of love.

The half-human nature invigorates Janet's greater desire for destruction and she continues to associate with the legend of the Scottish Cannibal⁴²:

Rise again Sawney Bean, Sawney Bean, Sawney Bean,
Rise again Sawney Bean, come from your cave and eat me (56)

Janet's desire for destroying others and herself climaxes with her wish that one of Sawney's man-traps might gape open in the road and that her car might plummet into it. The cave, in the outside world, represents a woman-trap set by men, but is also a self-trap set by Janet. The repetitive invocation of the patriarchal Sawney, who leads the family tribe of Beans to live on the profits of robbery by ambushing travelers on lonely narrow roads, reveals Janet's passion for male devastating power. This association foreshadows the dark doom that awaits her. Later, Janet feels deeply satisfied when given the part of Lady Macbeth in her reading lessons:

Where they most breed and haunt I have observed
The air is delicate (61)

Although this is not an excerpt from metrical folksong, it is a dramatic part of an episode that shows Banquo's chants as predicting Macbeth's sinister motives before Macbeth's castle.⁴³ It is borrowed from Barker to build an alerting signal (it contains a useful, metrical rhythm). This literary favour of the gloomy evil atmosphere shows Janet's emotional partiality to Lady Macbeth's conspiracy⁴⁴:

The multitudinous seas incarnadine
Making the green one red (61)

The words indicating colour—'incarnadine', 'green', 'red'—all describe Macbeth's

⁴² <http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/Scotland-History/SawneyBean.htm> pp. 1-2. March 31th, 2005.

⁴³ Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Act I, Scene VI. From *The Works of Shakespeare*. Vol. III. Part 31. Ed. W. E. Henley. (Printed at Edinburgh for London: Grant Richards, 1901), p. 91.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Act II, Scene II. p. 98.

sinister motives and become a literary hymn that is appropriated by Barker in order to create the sound effects of poetry through flesh and blood images. Ruminating on Macbeth's murder of Duncan in Shakespeare's play, Janet favours the 'seas incarnadine', or flesh-coloured. This bears the etymological sense of the verb 'incardinate'—'given a bodily form'. Janet's aspiration towards the murder conspiracy conceals a desire not merely to damage others but also to destroy her female body and to await rebirth. Janet's literary favour towards Macbeth's assassination of the Scottish King, implies how the Scottish exile clamours for liberty while mistakenly becoming another tyrannical usurper. Readers know that the irony lies in the discrepancy between the liberty Janet desires to reach and the enclosure that is induced by her abjection of femininity.

Janet remains aloof from the world of affection except for her love for her jackdaw, because she identifies herself with the bird unconsciously, murmuring complaints about the imprisoned world. She writes in a book, unlocking her heart to the male bird and saying that this love can detach her from earthly worries. Irony soon follows, however, with a reference to Medea's distress over love. The literary reference here recalls the closing lines of *Medea*:

Many are the Fates which Zeus in Olympus dispenses;
 Many matters the Gods bring to surprising ends.
 The things we thought would happen do not happen . . . (135)

Although this appropriation of the mythical tale does not come from balladry, the dramatic lyre involves metrical rhythm and is musically performed by theatres today; it thus bears some resemblance to dramatised love affairs as made apparent in oral literature. The expectation of blessed love, such as 'many fates' 'dispensed' and 'many matters' to 'ends', has been truncated through heavenly providence. This allusion to Medea's lamentation articulates a female insecurity in love and reveals a more masculine 'playful' attitude towards love as well; this is a typical paradigm for

romantic love in Greek mythology. The recurring theme of female power again shows the problem of a woman's physical and psychological displacement. Intending to redress her sinful love or ensnarement by Jason, Medea becomes enraged, using her powers as a witch and insisting upon the rejuvenation of the heart itself. However, this rejuvenation is impossible because the abjection of self-love has been internalised by her vengeful mind. Medea loses confidence both in her feminine beauty and in the loyalty of love after Jason abandons her. Knowing a woman's destiny to be like that of Zeus's women—those who were passionately owned and ruthlessly forsaken—Janet believes that her love for her jackdaw must be unearthly, that it must be not of the flesh but of a passionate spirit. The literary reference employs the metaphor of a demon lover that is powerful but insubstantial. Similarly, Janet's love for her male bird does not result from ownership but from an illusory distance from the earth; to her, love loses tangibility and it becomes insubstantial.

This disowned but expectant love finds another parallel in an allusion to the relationship between Orpheus and Eurydice. Janet lets her jackdaw fly outside giving him freedom but expecting him to return back to her side. She repeats the choral lines:

Shine clear and bright, Moon goddess . . .
 O crystal, bring my beloved to my home . . .
 Think, dear goddess of my love and how it came about . . .
 Bring him hither, bring him home . . .
 Shine clear, shine bright Moon goddess . . .

What is life to me without thee,
 What is left if thou art gone . . .
 . . . what is life without my love? (151)

Quoting Orpheus' grief-stricken voice after Eurydice descends into Hell, Barker borrows the metrical rhythms of assonance as well as a storyline of beauty and tragedy in order to mock Janet's gradual loss of hope. The repetition of 'home' implicitly deepens Janet's sense of lost love just as Orpheus laments his loss of

Eurydice. However, what involves a referential irony here is that Janet fantastically models Orpheus' risk-taking in searching for his love; she falls towards the roar of the waters of Avernus. When Janet is 'crazed and joyful' (152), she is 'flung . . . passionately at the dark figure' (152), foreshadowing her eventual murder by Jim. The end that Janet is stabbed by Jim's 'rabbit-skinning knife' (152) draws an ultimate tragedy to Janet's self-enclosure and her society's male blindness that accompanies the pathetic withdrawing wild wind to the far north, leaving only 'the sigh of the sea in the shell' (152). There exists a sharp contrast between Orpheus (a loyal male in pursuit of his lost love by descending into Hell) and Janet (a hostile female in pursuit of an ever-innocent but abused love, using her gardener to defy her internal Other). Readers know that Janet's favour in Orpheus' invocation produces an ironic effect in her quest for emotional consolation.

Barker's use of metrical rhythms and rhymes, as is evidenced by those appropriated fragments taken from ballads, literary dramas, and mythical tales, creates certain effects that embellish Janet's emotional progress out of restrictive girlhood to defiant young womanhood. The linguistic reading of the split self (as it resides in the fantasies of borrowed excerpts from oral literature in *O Caledonia*), reflects a maternally-abstract speaker through the contextual revelation of a Calvinist society. Barker's experiment with balladic appropriation offers a socially defiant character with instable emotions, someone who differs from the characterisation of a harmonious self as would be demonstrated by more traditional interpretations.

4.3.2 Class Conflict and the Elusive Self

Differing quite markedly from Janet's obsessive engagement with nature and with her intentional alienation from society in *O Caledonia*, Janie's internal distancing

from the world grows more gradually as she recognises gendered social experiences in *The White Bird Passes*. The novel is set in Elgin (the Lady's Lane), 1926, and explores Janie's illegitimate status when she is handed over to charity care in her childhood. The girlhood fantasies that are contained in the oral literature of these two novels demonstrate an abject self that refuses to confront the social positioning of women. However, the fantasy of Scottish songs and children's rhymes in *The White Bird Passes* does not show a revengeful self as it does for Janet in *O Caledonia*. Rather, it illustrates an elusive self that is constantly escaping to her own imaginative world. We see the life of both slum and country through the lens of an innocent child. Duncan asserts that 'the focus on childhood provides a new variant of the familiar motif of the Caledonian "antisgygny", with the schizophrenic national subject [being] reconfigured in the split between child and adult'.⁴⁵ He considers the Scottish child as a fictional image of the orphanage, 'detached from its familial roots and ties and unable to fully recognise itself as an adult subject without adopting an alternative identity'.⁴⁶ If the fascination with childhood in Scottish novels implies the elusive discomforts of a national subject, then childhood should be investigated through sociological factors in Scottish novels.

Janie's knowledge about men during her childhood comes mostly from her mother's impression of men:

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly, sae dauntingly
Gaed he.
He played a spring and danced it round,
Beneath the Gallow Tree. (66)

This quotation comes from the song about the noted robber Macpherson who is

⁴⁵ Petrie, Duncan. *Contemporary Scottish Fictions: Film, Television and the Novel*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 162.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

lamenting the pleasures of life.⁴⁷ Like Robin Hood, Macpherson robs from the rich to give to the poor. Such ‘altruism’, however, is lacking in the Lady’s Lane. The men who surround Janie in her childhood, men such as the Cruelty Inspector and the Sanitary Man, are generally manipulating the political and economic conditions of the Lady’s Lane. The positive words of this song become ironic chants that characterise Janie’s living conditions and that effectively contrast the different types of men who are ingrained in Janie’s mind. The pleasant imaginings of Janie’s childhood, however, are eventually displaced by lamentation—by chants that capture the necessity for leaving Lady’s Lane. She chants:

The summer’s gone
And all the flowers are dying. (102)

For I’ll be there
When summer’s in the meadows.
Or when the valley’s hushed
And white with snow. (103)

This children’s hymn is an excerpt from ‘Danny Boy’⁴⁸, and delivers a message from a woman to a man. Although the pleasure of summer fades, Janie still anticipates a coming bliss with the arrival of bright ‘white . . . snow’ abundant in the valley. The colour white may represent Janet’s nostalgic passion for ‘untainted’, post-war Scotland, for Scotland, as it existed before the arrival of an overwhelming industrialisation. The division of labour deepens the gap between social classes and increases economic discrimination. Later, when Janie faces her new orphanage home in Aberdeenshire, her mother consoles her:

O for the crags that are wild and majestic.
I sigh for the valley of dark Lochnagar. (107)

⁴⁷ An excerpt from ‘Macpherson’s Rant’. Buchan, Norman, selected. *101 Scottish Songs*. (Glasgow and London: Collins, 1962), pp. 96-97.

⁴⁸ <http://www.thewildgeese.com/pages/dannyboy.html> pp. 1-2 (1). May 27th, 2006.

This hymn comes from 'Dark Lochnagar' made by George Byron.⁴⁹ As a half-Scot by birth, Byron is known as a romantic outcast and spent his early childhood in Aberdeen. The irregular 'craggs' of Aberdeen may symbolise the untamed power of nature as well as the rebellious will of a social outcast; although this nature's force is 'wild', it is quite 'majestic' in spirit. The valley of dark Lochnagar implies the depths of humanity and the social demand for introspection and revolution.

It was not until she was sent to the orphanage of Skeyne, that Janie began to 'learn a bit of them' (105), and to become aware of the necessity for constrained social behaviour among women.

I must not talk about my food,
Nor fret if I don't think it good. (111)

This quotation comes from 'Table Rules for Little Folk'.⁵⁰ While Mrs. Thane's table manners reveal the denial of individuality within a community of dependent orphans, Janie's complaint about the maltreatment of children leads her to mock the overpowering individuality of the orphanage staff:

Pease brose, Pease brose,
Pease brose again, Chris,
They feed us a' like blackbirds.
And that's a bloody shame, Chris. (114)

This is a rhyme from 'Pease Brose Again Mither'.⁵¹ Janie imagines the children as blackbirds being fed pease meal by orphanage staff; she satirises the inadequacy of worldly provisions using nature's inauspicious blackbirds and using the parentless and solitary children at the orphanage. This children's rhyme softens Janie's hostility as it distracts her through natural fascination.

Janie's girl's-eye view of life is exposed largely through what she says as well

⁴⁹ http://www.scotsindependent.org/features/singasang/dark_lochnagar.htm pp. 1-2 (2). May 27th, 2006. See also the Audiovisual, Coulter, Phil. *Scottish Tranquility* [sound recording]. (Watford, Hertfordshire: Music Collection International, 1992). 1 sound disc (53:56 min.): 4 3/4 in.

⁵⁰ By anonymous poet. http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/docs/02_10_14.htm pp. 1-10 (7-8). April 5th, 2005.

⁵¹ <http://sniff.numachi.com/~rickheit/dtrad/pages/tiBROSMITH.html> February 10th, 2005.

as through what she does. Her awareness of the denial of a happy life in the Cairngorm Mountains gradually distances her from the stern world of the orphanage.

O Cairngorms, sae heich and blue
I'd see the warld
Were't na for you! (121)

The address to the Cairngorms highlights Janie's sense of being to her 'heich and blue' (mountainous but fantastic) world. This separation from her societal self proves her 'ootlin', an outsider unfit to the orphanage. Thus she escapes into a natural world that is totally different from her society.

O say what it is that thing called light
Which I can ne'er enjoy.
What are the blessings of the sight? (129)

This address again discloses Janie's yearning for another world filled with 'blessings of the sight'. This hymn comes from Colley Cibber's poem, 'The Blind Boy', and meditates between different truths invoked by visual worlds.⁵² When contrasted with the mirthful period spent in overcrowded slum life, the natural highland setting of the Cairngorms provides, to Janie's view, an imaginative space that divorces itself from rigid life in the orphanage. The sound of a ladybird ticking and humming across the boxwood in a blind, mechanical panic, effectively soothes Janie:

Fly away home.
Your house is on fire.
Your children all gone. (120)

This melody comes from 'Lady, Bird Lady, Bird Fly Away Home'.⁵³ Janie identifies her position with that of the ladybird's. The fire image evokes such a sense of homelessness for Janie that Mrs. Thane keeps puzzling about what would become of her when she 'got out into the world' (120) of imagination.

Janie's disobedient spirit gradually grows when Mannie asks her name and

⁵² <http://litcal.yasuda-u.ac.jp/ml/litcal/200012/msg00002.html> pp. 1-3 (2). April 5th, 2005.

⁵³ <http://ingeb.org/songs/ladybird.html> February 10th, 2005.

inquires as to whether or not she can sing. Without replying, Janie strides down the furrow and sings out to him:

There was a wee cooper
Wha lived in Fife
Nicketty. Nacketty. Noo, Noo, Noo. (135)

This traditional Scottish song, 'The Wee Cooper O'Fife', depicts a cultural phenomenon that was once acceptable in society: to 'beat ...your wife so that she does the housework'.⁵⁴ Janie remains indifferent to Mannie's friendly inquiry. Her reaction goes too far, although the children were in disgrace with Mannie's wife. Despite her reaction, Mannie as a kind man is different from those in the slum and he has been a comfort to Janie. Mannie's role serves to enhance Janie's growth and seals Janie's prejudice towards man's customary treatment of young girls. We may discern this while Mannie sings:

For the Minister kissed the fiddler's wife.
And he couldna' sleep for thinkin' o't. (137)

This song is an excerpt from Robert Burns's 'My Love She's But A Lassie Yet'.⁵⁵ The Minister's kissing is spontaneous and stainless in mind, but this gender relationship is a complete reverse of what Janie perceives in the Lady's Lane. Mannie's singing highlights Janie's imaginative escape from psychological pain as it results from economic and gendered societal discrimination.

When asked whether she wants to leave the orphanage for advanced education (as based upon her past outstanding academic performance), Janie ridicules a Trustee for doing nothing more than dodging Mrs. Thane's diagnosis of Janie's 'disintegrated personality' (143). Janie steadies her thoughts against them:

Of his bones are coral made . . .
Nothing of him that doth fade. (147)

⁵⁴ http://www.rampantscotland.com/songs/blsongs_cooper.htm pp. 1-2 (1). February 10th, 2005.

⁵⁵ <http://celtic-lyrics.com/lyrics/343> February 10th, 2005. See also, *The Canongate Burns*. Eds. Andrew Noble and Patrick Scott Hogg. (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Limited, 2001), pp. 328-329.

But doth suffer a sea change
 Into something rich and strange. (148)

This poem, 'Full Fathom Five', is adapted from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*⁵⁶ and depicts how the body of a drowned man is transformed into treasures of the sea, and how mermaids ring funeral bells for him. Janie mourns over the unbreakable chain of female destiny that is stressed by the consistent rhyme of 'made', 'fade', 'change', and 'strange'. This masculine rhyme with its four stressed vowels--/e/--signifies the tension and pressure surrounding a woman's restrictive destiny. The last line underscores Janie's unconscious emotional self-enclosure. If women want to alter their fate, they cannot escape a fate filled with rich adversity and strangeness to themselves. The ellipsis after 'coral made' illustrates Janie's sentimental overstatement and the retrospective anger that stems from her social position as an underprivileged child. The Trustees of the Home, misunderstanding her entirely, suggest various careers that they deem appropriate for Janie's future; Janie, however, proposes to stand on her own feet. This narrative report of a thought-act, as demonstrated through Shakespearian reference, builds a statement not only of defiance and independence but also of vigilance and the ability to speak about silent abuse and self-enclosure. Janie is aware that both she and the landscape stand aching, waiting for release:

Guard us, we pray
 Throughout the coming night. (156)

This hymn highlights Janie's fear regarding the potentially adverse future. It suggests that the heroine grows indistinct, as she becomes part of the landscape in which she moves. This ambiguous concluding tone in *The White Bird Passes* reveals an

⁵⁶ http://www.chicagoacappella.org/about_us/prg-shakespeare.htm pp. 1-14 (8). March 31th, 2005. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Act I, Scene II. From *The Works of Shakespeare*. Vol. I. Part 1. Ed. W. E. Henley. (Printed at Edinburgh for London: Grant Richards, 1901), p. 29.

imaginatively hopeful but practically naïve self in her distrusting, repressive life.

Kesson's use of balladic fragments creates a pathway for distracting the female protagonist from her discomforts about societal discrimination. Through her imagination—with its power to capture landscape, with its passion for the domestic land, and with its religious inclination towards legendary folktale—Janie escapes the psychological pain of her innocent but ignored childhood to become an enlightened but melancholy orphanage girl. Kesson borrows balladic fragments and literary poems from Shakespeare's plays in order to achieve a parallel between nature's solitary but wild power and the individual's abjection of being an Other through the civilised world's maltreatment of economically marginalised groups of people, particularly women.

Conclusion

The use of oral literature in these two novels prompts linguistic investigation into how women appropriate the 'female topics' of oral tradition in order to offer a woman's psychological insight towards her gender relationships in different cultural contexts. Charles Duffin claims that 'by examining a text we can look not only at the information itself but at the way in which that information is presented'.⁵⁷ Barker's and Kesson's appropriation of fantasy as practiced by Scottish oral literature, not only functions as a response to social oppressive forces at the conscious level of aesthetic sensibility, but also serves as a vehicle for contextualising interpretative effects on a psychological, reflexive level.

We see both protagonists' circumscribed social conditions both through their

⁵⁷ Duffin, Charles. 'Fixing Tradition: Making History from Ballad Texts'. *The Ballad in Scottish History*. Ed. Edward J. Cowan. (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 19-35 (21).

girlhood eyes gifted with imaginative association with natural wild power and then through their melancholy entry into womanhood. Janet and Janie both have strong appetites for imagination. This leads them to create a state of mind wherein they might temporarily escape the social maltreatment of women. Nevertheless, their nourishment of the abjection of the maternal, an ambition that might help them transcend the misfortunes of their circumstances, does not lead to their growth or to their maturity, but instead brings about a tense conflict within their society. The linguistic reading of appropriated oral fragments reveals an authorial intention to articulate the mental conditions of their female protagonists through different cultural contexts. These novelists appropriate ballads and songs from oral literature in order to foreground an alternate interpretation for traditional balladic themes that are unique to women.

Part Three

Gendering Socialisation:

The Imprisonment of Anti-Heroines

While most Scottish women writers explore female psychological truth through women's perverse involvement in patriarchal society or through their intentional ignorance of patriarchal institutions, Alice Thompson's *Justine* (1996) and *Pandora's Box* (1998) explore some apocryphal themes, such as the motif of the sexual warrior Judith who uses female power which leads to men's death.¹ The two novels respectively allude to the Marquis de Sade's *Justine* (1797) and the Greek mythological story of 'Pandora's Box', exposing some of the richly multifarious twists and turns in Justine's later history. Justine and Pandora, spokeswomen of sexually abused chastity, in Thompson's new revisions have multiple meanings and many faces, each reflecting something central to twentieth-century gender culture.

In Alice Thompson's *Justine* and *Pandora's Box*, Justine and Pandora, much like Judith, contradict one of the cherished stereotypes of twentieth-century gender culture: beauty and intellect do not go together. Implicit in Thompson's sketch of the 'dangerous woman' is a feminine troping of the 'conception' of the crime. In these two novels, readers may note that the crime does not stem from men's murder of their obsessed over female body, but from men's *desire* to destroy their fetishised female subjects, that is to say, a crime arising from the male symbolic gendering of power. The dangerous woman, amorous but subversive in the guise of femininity,

¹ Stocker, Margarita. *Judith, Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).

plays a role in Thompson's two novels of a conscious opponent to men's unconscious defiance of the female body in the battle of the sexes. Thompson's socialised relationship of gender reverses the aggressive method that is assumed by the sexual warrior Judith, who conspires to a monstrous selling and murdering of sex.

My argument is that Thompson's purpose in the representation of the 'woman sexual warriors', Justine and Pandora, as opposed to the embodiment of Justine in de Sade's *Justine* and the Greek mythical figure of Pandora, is to demonstrate a regressive but simultaneously aggressive socialised relationship of the two sexes. I define the two novels' socialisation of gender relationships in terms of their reversal of the gender relationships shown by the earlier texts they refer to. In other words, female characters in the two novels use the temptation to *conform to* (rather than *defy against*) the male construction of feminine beauty, (through sexual commitment or verbal obedience), as a progressive measure to expose the male motive behind their obsessive illumination with the feminine beauty. This type of anti-heroine imprisonment, which is constrained by men but intentionally taken by women, destabilises the social relationship in gender interaction.

We may then ask why in Thompson's *Justine* and *Pandora's Box*, female seductive virtue plays an important role in unmasking men's obsession with idealised feminine beauty. In the two following chapters, I will demonstrate that this type of dangerous woman uncovers the psychological truth of men who like to construct the image of ideal feminine beauty: male rejection of the maternal trauma (loss of the maternal love) in *Justine* and male narcissism (men's erroneous belief that masculine science is capable of governing and creating all in the phenomenal world) in *Pandora's Box*. We will examine the male abjection of the female body in Chapter Five. What deserves our exploration is whether or not the two types of

male psychological truth in the male obsession with feminine beauty are merely a compensation of lost maternal love or rather the illusory enhancement of male narcissism. As a matter of fact, the male obsession with the feminine beauty ironically involves men's desire to destroy the female body, and their need to secure their sense of ego.

In Chapter Six, I will further use Kristeva's concept of intertextuality to do a linguistic, comparative analysis of these two novels. In these two novels, Thompson also makes allusions to the stereotypical persons in de Sade's *Justine* and to the mythical beings in Greek mythology in Pandora's Box. She ridicules the male sexual exploitation of the virtuous Justine in the French original, and scorns the male use of Pandora as a seducing but destructive tool between men's wars (considering her role in the power struggle between Zeus and Prometheus) in the Greek myth about Pandora's Box. I contend that by protesting against the patriarchal notion and use of women in the referential works, Thompson also shows the male oppression of the female body under the alternative mask of male obsession with the idealised female body.

Chapter Five

The Visual Construction of the Feminine

Visually, she was mine. As long as she didn't look up and see me,
I had the upper hand. I was in control. I wanted to watch her forever,
never disturb her, leave her trapped in her world of words so that
I could just look.

Justine, 75

Unlike Tennant and Kennedy, and Barker and Kesson, Alice Thompson crafts literary twins of women (one virtue-conforming, and the other, desire-following) to obscure the distinctions drawn between the good and bad woman in patriarchal society. I choose Thompson's *Justine* (1996) and her *Pandora's Box* (1998) in order to present a view of the 'dangerous woman' as one who conforms to a socially-recognised femininity in order to seduce a man's pornographic attentions; and who seduces in order to reveal how male narcissism constructs a harmonious gender relationship where there is none.

In this chapter, I aim to explore male visual construction of the feminine as 'the Other'. The male visual representations of femininity in Alice Thompson's *Justine* (1996) and *Pandora's Box* (1998) have been presented in artistic and artificial ways, as both painting and 'surgically operated body' respectively. Both presentations of feminine beauty conceal an ideology that effectively connects patriarchal constructions of virtue and femininity. Such connection underlines a dichotomy between vice and virtue as has been employed in literary criticism, particularly in the analysis of a character's moral fabric such as in the case of Jekyll and Hyde. Some literary twins illustrate diverging types of morality—vice versus virtue—whereas others blur the borders between these two. Representations of vice and virtue differ: the literary segregation shows the singularity of the two moral polarities while the

blurring of them indicates an ambiguity between these two extremes.

Stevenson's creation of ambiguity, as examined through examples concerning Tennant's female protagonists in Chapter Two, has founded a blurring of the border between good and evil natures in literature. The polarity in literary criticism between goodness and evil over-simplifies the complexities of human nature; this causes literary criticism to lose objectivity when observing justice and humanity. While Tennant crafts her female protagonists as virtuous women who desire revenge for patriarchal ill-treatment and who seek after the powers of witchcraft, Thompson makes the two literary twins more human; each has both a virtuous and evil side to her personality. Illuminating the ambiguity of vice and virtue, Alice Thompson's *Justine* and *Pandora's Box* respectively allude to Marquis de Sade's *Justine* (1797) and to the Greek mythological story of Pandora's Box; this will be examined intertextually in more detail in the following chapter.

In this chapter, I want to contend that both of Thompson's novels present moral binaries, demonstrating the dependency of vice and virtue through the embodiment of female characters. However, where Thompson diverges from the referential works is in her deliberate reworking of the Marquis de Sade's notion of power politics in sadomasochism and in her reworking of the Greek mythical notion of female autonomy presented in 'Pandora's Box'. Thompson uses the previous texts to foreground the 'dangerous woman' (vice in the guise of femininity) and in order to disrupt the male connection between virtue and femininity; her revisions establish textual irony as they endanger male subjectivity.

In the first section of this chapter (5.1), I shall discuss how Thompson revises the narrative tradition of literary doubles as previously defined in the French original, and how she thereby obscures the distinction of doubles altogether. I contend that Thompson's intentional blurring of the borders of moral absolutes (here, the

dangerous woman in the disguise of placid femininity) reverses the normal gender hierarchy. This transgressive gender relationship triggers an underlying truth in male psychic construction concerning feminine beauty: under the masculine obsession with feminine beauty lurks a motive to subvert the object that symbolises an independent female subjectivity. The second section (5.2) focuses on how the male visual obsession with femininity is a psychological symptom of fetishism; it thus ironically involves a male desire to defy the obsessed object, i.e. female subjectivity. This male defiant desire can never be fulfilled; the male remains victimised by the object with which he was infatuated until his obsession halts. The nature of this 'consciously obsessed-over but unconsciously rejected Other' shares an affinity with Kristeva's theory of abjection. In the third section (5.3), I shall discuss how Thompson, questioning the authenticity of polar moral absolutes, demonstrates gothic but fantastic representations of the dangerous women in the guise of feminine seduction, in order to invalidate the male construction of a feminine Other and to challenge the conventional narrative notion of morality.

5.1 Moral Twins and Gender Subjectivity

The narrative tradition of moral twins in female characters emerged in de Sade's *Justine*; this novel prescribes polar moral absolutes which fail when required to match the logic of life survival: virtue (the weak for its conformity to chastity) loses and vice (the strong for its domination by sexual violence) wins. In de Sade's work, Justine (as the embodiment of feminine virtue) adopts the posture of the Virgin Mary and this posturing incites violent desire in the monks. On the contrary, Juliette (the embodiment of transgressive female chastity) becomes a prostitute to win her life,

thereby mocking the ineffectual piety of Justine who suffers from the male exploitation of female poverty. Regardless of de Sade's intention in establishing polar absolutes in these female figures, Thompson's revision of de Sade's sadomasochistic notion of power politics in gender associations, ostensibly interrogates the veracity of these polar moral absolutes. At the same time, Thompson's novel postulates that the image of ideal femininity is nothing more than the subjugation of woman as Other: in its construction, this means that male subjectivity is the primary interest behind the realisation of ideal femininity.

Through the female characters in *Pandora's Box*, Thompson employs a dependency upon polar moral absolutes in order to trigger horror in the male characters concerning the abjection of the female body; this epitomises female subjectivity. According to the Sadeian notion of sadomasochism, sadism is achieved through gender association; in Thompson's works, the revengeful woman is disguised by a stereotypical femininity and is fantastically created and idealistically desired by men; this type—the woman in disguise—scrutinises gender relationships and reveals such categorisations to be arbitrary. In *Pandora's Box*, an anonymous figure called 'Pandora' is physically re-constructed by a surgeon, Dr. Noah Close. After Pandora's murdered body vanishes, the male protagonist, Dr. Noah Close, searches for his ideally re-created body and is assisted by Venus. A master in witchcraft, Venus serves as a twin to her sister Pandora, a master in conventional female domesticity. Both remain passively aware of themselves: Pandora, cool as ice, silently accepts modeling by Dr. Close; Venus, as a visionary prophet, feeds Dr. Close's aspiration to search for the idealised body by offering the supernatural information about surroundings during their journey. Thompson uses the female view of gender relationships to govern male and female interactions in her novel; this stands in sharp contrast to the version of physical domination practiced by Sadeian moral twins. Thompson uses older forms of

gender relationships to examine how a patriarchy reads the female body; she reverts socialisation in Sadeian gender relationships in order to show an obsessive (but in fact aggressive) patriarchal construction of female body.

Noah's scientific objectification of his internal 'Other' (his attempts to turn it into a visually ideal female body) discloses his own narcissism as he tries to defy his own feminine side. Regarding individual abjection of the societal degraded image, Kristeva suggests that:

The 'symbol' is any joining, any bringing together that is a contrast—one that either follows hostilities or presupposes them—and, finally, any exchange, including an exchange of hostility.¹

The semiotic aspect of a sound-image (the signifier: the male ideal of femininity, represented by mythical Pandora as an arranged bride as a medium between male wars) will lend itself to the meaning of a term (the signified: degradation and submission); sometimes the signifier will work against the signified. In order to obliterate his fear of degradation in gender relationships, Noah creates an ideal female body (that is the male ideal of femininity); he uses a blind confidence in science in order to deny his feminine self; this fear of his feminine side is later evidenced through his desire of Venus' passions of protection during his search for his created body and also his fear of Venus' threatening supernatural power. The body satiates Noah's desire to exercise his masculine scientific capabilities. The murder of the body, however, threatens Noah's existence when it no longer serves as a puppet for his narcissism. Noah's internal Other gothically threatens him during his search for the murdered body after the substituted Other (the ideal female body) disappears.

Deviating from de Sade's *Justine*, Thompson further stresses the threat of the dangerous woman disguised as pliant feminine beauty; she does this in order to reflect

¹ Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 49.

upon the underlying psychological truth concerning the masculine construction of and obsession with feminine beauty: in *Justine*, for instance, the male obsession with idealised feminine beauty masks an existential anxiety and an unconscious effort to defy the obsessed object (the idealised maternal body). In de Sade's *Justine*, virtue falls prey to vice: the female protagonist, Justine, as an embodiment of virtue, falls victim to the sexual perversions of many male sadists. In sharp contrast to Juliette's success when she abandons the idea of virtuous femininity, Justine's mental anguish in sexual sufferings never facilitates female liberation—never translates it into an instrument of power. Thompson's revision of the Sadeian moral twins unveils the nexus between pleasure and pain, demonstrating an interpretation of a previously 'existing dilemma'². Sadeian sexual pleasure derives primarily from the submission of the partner; however, this physical submission cannot sufficiently satiate a Sadist's mind. 'The annihilation of the partner', as Angela Carter illuminates, emerges as 'the only sufficient proof of the triumph of the ego'.³ Thus the sadist's pleasures of transgression consist in the acquisition of power over his partner, from which the dominating subject ambitiously and ferociously needs to affirm his/her existence. A sadist's surrender to vicious sexuality breeds a more powerful dominating power, but this power deviously affirms the degradation of chastity.

In the Sadeian literary world, sadism relishes pleasures of corporeal control; a sadist is able to grasp a dominating power over his partner, at least in an empirical world. Alice Thompson differentiates her viewpoint on the politics of power, particularly in *Justine*, from that of the Sadeian world. In Thompson's parody of the

² Airaksinen argues that virgin innocence or virtue represents the natural in the Sadeian world. Pleasure, as 'nature's vengeance', 'is transformed into reaction towards nature: the intolerably uncontrollable sensual irritation is directed against innocent victims via pain and mental anguish'. Airaksinen, Timo. *The Philosophy of the Marquis de Sade*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 48.

³ Carter, Angela. *The Sadeian Woman: an exercise in cultural history*. (London: Virago Press, 2000 [1979]), pp. 142-143.

power distribution between vice (the dominator) and virtue (the dominated), femininity itself becomes embroiled in varying levels of control and thus complicates the distribution of power between vice and virtue. Feminine beauty in its visual form (as virtuous meekness) serves as a trap that reveals the masculine desire for an ideal woman. The image of dangerous women foregrounds gender politics: the subversive power of vice lurks in a conforming act of virtue. Thompson's construction of the dangerous woman's political world implicitly directs and scandalously exposes the masculine fear of the threatening female body.

In Thompson's fictional figuration of visual beauty, the seductive power of femininity ultimately aims to reveal man's dependency upon his created Other, who masterfully constructs his own individuality on the basis of a woman's submission. Thompson's intentional interruption of the link between the slave (virtue) and the tyrant (vice) articulates her insight into man's psychological anxiety concerning his existence. Man's obsession with female beauty involves his abjection of the maternal body and his unconscious desire to demolish it. In other words, the man who becomes absorbed in the object of feminine beauty unconsciously desires to subvert his obsessed object and his own feminine side. Thompson destroys the conventional notion of literary twins to be understood simply in terms of power acquisition. She does this by using a bewitching woman (Venus) in the disguise of a silently beautiful woman (Pandora) in *Pandora's Box*, and a revengeful woman (Juliette) in the disguise of the femininely beautiful woman (Justine) in *Justine*. The moral categorisation of female polar twins in de Sade's work is here falsified: the woman's development of her 'self' cannot be categorised by any one of moral absolutes.

In these two novels, virtue does not resemble the Sadeian idea of the dominated, and vice does not seize the power of the dominator. Literary twins, in Thompson's literary characterisation, no longer remain distinctive counterparts but double-edged

duplicates, as tools that reveal the masculine desire to construct visually perfected feminine beauty.

5.2 *Visual Obsession and Psychological Defilement*

Since the sadomasochistic discourse of power politics has been interrogated psychologically in terms of the gender ego's construction, we need to further investigate how the reversal of power politics works to deconstruct polar moral absolutes in gender relations. In other words, it is imperative to discuss how the male empirical obsession with the visually exquisite female body, paradoxically connects their psychological rejection of the maternal body and any maternal impulses they might have. In *Pandora's Box* and *Justine*, Thompson employs the delicate female body (through the figures of Pandora and Justine) not solely to expose them as fetishised objects, but to explore the motives of fetishistic subjects who appropriate objects fetishistically. McCallum claims that reading fetishism through a feminist perspective 'elucidates the interplay between individual desire as it conforms to or deviates from normative injunctions and inter-subjective relations in the formation of identity'.⁴ We may say that Thompson's reading of fetishistic subjects provides a version of patriarchy in which these objects open up possible individual desires of the subjects.

But does this obsessive passion feed individual demands of existence? Wilhelm Stekel defines fetishism in relation to sex, indicating that as one prefers certain characteristics in sexual objects (as one 'fetishises' certain aspects of the female anatomy), he attempts to find a 'form of sexual gratification which will make the

⁴ McCallum, E. L. *Object Lessons: How to do things with Fetishism*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 107.

sexual partner superfluous'; this attitude involves the 'fear of the sexual partner', a fear which shows a darker side of sexuality in the struggle between the sexes.⁵ We then may ask why such a struggle exists in the formation of sexual identity. According to Freud, various forms of sexual perversion, such as fetishism, homosexuality, and voyeurism, 'either *extend*, in an anatomical sense, beyond the regions of the body that are designed for sexual union, or *linger* over the intermediate relations to the sexual objects which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path to the final sexual aim'.⁶ My reading of the fetish subject-object relationship belongs to the first symptom of fetishism, that of *extension*. 'The final sexual aim', in terms of Freud's definition of *lingering*, is genital intercourse that then leads towards reproduction; reproduction, as a form of sexual consumption, is not relevant in these two novels when it comes to the internal desires of fetishistic subjects. What I am interested in is the impetus beyond that desire for 'sexual union' (as Freud defines it) that exists in the first symptom of sexual deviance. Stekel concurs with Binet's explanation of Freud's theory of fetishism, illustrating that 'the trauma becomes the cause of the parathia if it strikes a predisposed individual'.⁷ In other words, this parathia, expressed in the form of fetishism, conceals a psychological defilement (wherein men degrade themselves by rejecting the Other which is their feminine Other) that aims to redress the trauma of a 'predisposed individual'.

In regard to this 'predisposed individual', we may further explore the sense of loss felt through the individuation of the fetishistic subject. McCallum takes de Lauretis's model of lesbian fetishism, which posits the origin of the fetish in the loss

⁵ Stekel, Wilhelm. *Sexual Aberrations: The Phenomena of Fetishism in Relation to Sex*. Vol. 1. (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd, 1930), pp. 3-4.

⁶ Thurschwell, Pamela. *Sigmund Freud*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 53. In reference to Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Trans. James Strachey. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1905).

⁷ Stekel, Wilhelm. *Sexual Aberrations: The Phenomena of Fetishism in Relation to Sex*. Vol. 1. (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd, 1930), p 4.

of a female body, and traces it back to the heterosexual male model of Freud's psychological assumptions concerning fetishism; this model considers fetishism a form of compensation for the taboo on incest.⁸ In de Lauretis's view of fetishism, the loss of individuation is the experience of female body dispossessed by a masculine woman; again, the loss relates to the man's experience of bodily dispossession (by his mother). Although the sex of the fetishistic subject is different in the two cases, both try to disavow this sense of loss by raising a plea against female bodily dispossession.

This rejection of the sense of loss, paradoxically compensated by the obsession with lost objects, recounts the ramifications of Sadeian terror.⁹ In order to compensate for the pain generated by the humiliation of the flesh, one must ascribe the value of exaltation to the flesh. Regarding the nature of Sadeian pornographic vice on the female flesh, Simone de Beauvoir comments:

Sade had actually made the imagination the mainspring of vice; but vice teaches us a certain truth through the very fantasies on which it feeds, and the proof is that it ends in orgasm, that is, in a definite sensation; whereas the illusions on which virtue feeds are never concretely recouped by the individual. According to the philosophy that Sade borrowed from his age, sensation is the only measure of reality, and if virtue arouses no sensation, it is because it has no real basis.¹⁰

De Beauvoir's view exposes how the marriage of vice and sensation overwhelms the absent quality of virtue. However, we also discern a reversal: virtue can be embodied materially (in *Pandora's Box*, it is the artificial female body after surgical operation; in *Justine*, it is the artistic female body in the painted canvas). These visual

⁸ McCallum, E. L. *Object Lessons: How to do things with Fetishism*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 107-180.

⁹ Allison argues that Sadeian terror originates in existential anxiety. He indicates that for de Sade, 'nature is the sum of forces of creation and destruction; to create, one must destroy'. There is no natural order to be maintained; nature could possibly be everything in dynamic transformation. Sensational destruction justifies existential terror. Allison, David. 'Sade's Itinerary of Transgression'. Sawhney, Deepak Narang, and Hanson, Amy, eds. *The Divine Sade*. Warwick Journal in Philosophy. (University of Warwick, 1994), pp. 132-158 (145-146).

¹⁰ De Beauvoir, Simone. 'Must we burn Sade?' *The Marquis de Sade*. Ed. Paul Dinnage. (Times Mirror, New English Library, 1962), pp. 9-61(51).

expressions of feminine beauty are seductively attractive in the presentations of obedient women. The materialised presentation of female beauty participates in the Gothic articulation of man's psychological negation of the female body. In Thompson's view, vice is not necessarily equivalent to sensation; vice can be demonstrated in the disguise of virtue. From this perspective, Sadeian terror has been deconstructed by virtue, rather than articulated by vice. In Thompson's novel, female protagonists take advantage of the gendered stereotypes that men invent about their sex in order to destroy the assumptions of the male narrator.

Laura Mulvey in *Visual and Other Pleasures* contends that the male gaze, out of scopophiliac instinct (pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object), serves as the instrument in the formation of the ego's libido (forming identification processes).¹¹ She considers that the pleasure of looking has been split between active/male and passive/female, so that the determining male gaze, which projects its fantasy onto the female figure, subjugates woman into a position wherein they bear the burden of meaning.¹² But we may then wonder why the ego's libido carries the desire to reject the maternal body with which it is paradoxically infatuated. There is little room in society for male tenderness because it is deemed to be both feminine and 'Other'. The ambivalence that exists between the fetishistic subject's oscillation between his ego libido and scopophiliac instinct, can be sufficiently elucidated by Kristeva's theoretical assumption of the child's abjection of the maternal. Kelly Oliver writes about Kristeva's view of the 'abject mother':

The 'subject' discovers itself as the impossible separation/identity of the maternal body. It hates that body but only because it can't be free of it. That body, the body without border, the body out of which this abject subject

¹¹ Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. (Hampshire: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989), p. 25.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 19. Mulvey takes a woman's role in the traditional exhibition to illuminate that woman's appearance has been 'coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness'.

came, is impossible.¹³

The subject demands its source in order to sustain its existence; however, this source threatens its autonomy. Following Lacan's theoretical concept of the mirror, Mulvey indicates that man's identification with the object of his gaze mimics the process of ego formation in the child's recognition of its own mirror image, and that this first and critical association allows the articulation of the individual's future.¹⁴ The child's identity is inaugurated according to this recognition, but also according to the renunciation of his mother.

We see how the male narrator particularly in *Justine* is infatuated with a self-image built upon his own desires. In *Justine*, when the narrator realises that Justine has brought him to his knees, he claims:

My anger was a reclamation of my identity: my rage fought against the world of Justine that I had slipped into, had been slowly sliding into like quicksand from the moment I had first seen her. . . . I had been tricked by the beautiful object that I had sought to possess. She had had her own thoughts and desires which had manipulated me. (*Justine* 124-25)

However, this identification involves grief over the narrator's own abandoned situation (he had been abandoned by his mother for his deformed appearance in childhood) and a requisite reproach of the loss of his mother's love. In *Justine*, abjection of the maternal body is made manifest in the attempt by the fetishistic subject to obliterate the trauma of his own defeated self in childhood. Although the trauma of 'lost maternal love' is not indicated in *Pandora's Box* as in *Justine*, the abjection of the female body is still demonstrated through male narcissism, in the male creation of his personal Other in order to ascertain his identity. In the two novels, abjection of the fetishistic object is ostensibly expressed through obsession with the

¹³ Oliver, Kelly. *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 60.

¹⁴ Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. (Hampshire: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989), pp. 17-18.

fetishistic objects; male protagonists in both works aim to repudiate the abject female body.

5.3 *Endangering the Image of the Other*

Fetishised objects in the two novels occupy a paradoxical position: firstly, as the object that in reality implies male subjugation, and secondly, as the narrating subject of male subjugation. Because the texts continually repeat scenes that are concerned with the highly visualised female body and that indicate the potential of the fetishistic subject's destruction, I shall continue to examine how the male obsession with the female body is accompanied by a desire to withdraw meaning from the fetishistic objects; attention is also drawn to the woman's renunciation of the subjectivity from which she biologically evolves and of which she is necessarily dispossessed.

If women have no inherent sexual dignity but can only choose between virtues and vice, as in the case of de Sade's conception of sexuality, then, as Lawrence W. Lynch concludes, women have no physical identity.¹⁵ The anonymity of the gendered body is perhaps the only common point between Thompson's work and de Sade's exploration of female moral absolutes. Thompson complicates the distinction of moral absolutes by presenting the 'dangerous woman' in the guise of feminine conformity. As I have already indicated in the Introduction and in earlier chapters, Margaret Elphinstone defines the concept of the 'dangerous woman' in female Scottish writing, according to three crucial characteristics: evil equals glamour; the dangerous woman must reject the patriarchal world; this dangerous woman plays a role that has

¹⁵ Lynch, Lawrence W. *The Marquis de Sade*. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), p. 57.

consequences for narrative tradition and theory.¹⁶ As seen in Thompson's two novels, the female moral twins are beautiful, mysteriously evil, and difficult to capture. The essence of the dangerous woman refuses to be defined. However, we know that unlike de Sade, Thompson merges the characters into *one* woman who is able to exist as everything: subservient and *femme fatale*, reality and dream. The moral ambiguity of such twins challenges the validity of polarised morality. Regarding the simplification of the womanly figure, Angela Carter describes the 'false universalising' of aesthetic pornography:

Pornography, like marriage and the fictions of romantic love, assists the process of false universalizing. Its excesses belong to that timeless, locationless area outside history, outside geography, where fascist art is born.¹⁷

Aesthetic female beauty, in Carter's view, becomes a process by which a woman has been loaded with the burden of perfection or is stigmatised as an unredeemable site of corruption. By *visually* appreciating a woman, a man reifies her, and transforms her into a submissive object. By objectifying women through their gaze, men turn women into a fetish. This is illustrated when the narrator appreciates Justine's portrait and when he lingers over fragments of her body, from her eyes to her neck and her wrists. He desires to engrave, to be the first to inscribe his mark on her untainted body. This desire is a brutal effort to expunge the feminine from the male self.

The man's 'false universalising' of aesthetic pornography, as Jane Ussher remarks, connotes a male obsession with the 'eternal feminine'—with that which can, through possession, be translated into a version of himself.¹⁸ As Ussher remarks, the

¹⁶ Elphinstone, Margaret. 'Contemporary Feminist Fantasy in the Scottish Literary Tradition'. *Tea and Leg Irons: New Feminist Readings from Scotland*. Ed. Caroline Gonda. (London: Open Letters, 1992), pp. 42-59 (45).

¹⁷ Carter, Angela. *The Sadeian Woman: an exercise in cultural history*. (London: Virago Press, 2000 [1979]), p. 12.

¹⁸ Ussher, Jane M. *Fantasies of Femininity: reframing the boundaries of sex*. (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 110.

idealised image of woman fosters male narcissism:

The idealised image of 'woman' on a pedestal poses no threat; there is no opportunity for merger here. There is no possibility of rejection, or even of sex, for she is 'too good', too untouchable, to even look at man, like the 'lady' within the ritual of courtly love.¹⁹

As long as the male rejection of the female body remains in the sphere of courtly love, male-to-female relations will remain an alternative kind of perversion: an ineffectual effort to 'love' the refused Other. In this extreme, the man does not recognise the maternal abjection within as well as he recognises the dangerous woman without. Nevertheless, the female characters in these two novels share their names with mythical and Sadeian characters. Thompson chooses these referents precisely because she deviates from such mythical and literary constructions, from role models that represent a 'repository of the type of sensibility we call "feminine"'.²⁰

5.3.1 The Artificial Female Body and Male Narcissism

In *Pandora's Box*, the desire to suppress the female body is encapsulated in the male narrator's scientific delineation of the female body. This scientific modeling of the perfect icon of female beauty shows a subjugated Other that can satiate a man's role as dominant artistic collector and appreciator. Pandora is a young woman, taciturn, tender, but without betraying her origins, and therefore mysterious; Venus, on the other hand, represents an easily irritated witchlike woman: she breaks loose from humanity, transforms her shape occasionally, and has supernatural visions. Although Pandora and Venus are not distinct representations of moral polarities, they are completely emotional and dispositional opposites. The easily enraged Venus

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.

²⁰ Carter, Angela. *The Sadeian Woman: an exercise in cultural history*. (London: Virago Press, 2000 [1979]), p. 47.

withstands destructive warnings, shows the self-indulgent scientist's internal desire to create his own 'idealised body [of Pandora] that never broke down, a body that was infallible' (5). The beast-like figure with its unexpected temper (Venus), and the perfect human figure with its cold emotions (Pandora), together satirise a male quest for idealised femininity, according to both appearance and disposition.

In the novel, Dr. Close finds a seriously burned woman on his doorstep and reconstructs her into his ideal of female beauty. She makes an unprecedented recovery but remains mysteriously mute—a male fantasy comes true: the woman becomes a beautiful object that cannot talk back to him. Pandora's taciturn disposition emerges in opposition to Venus' unyielding temper. As Pandora enters Dr. Close's life, her presence is enough to fill his world with bliss:

Words were no longer an issue. She had come out of the blue, pulled apart the sky like a curtain and stepped out on to the stage of his life. All he could do was give silent applause for this clue to his life. He had been given a clue to his life.

That she was mute only appealed to his sense of justice.

(Pandora's Box, 20)

Dr. Close saves Pandora's life and she is more readily objectified—a form of payment—because she cannot speak. Dr. Close's satisfaction in life relies entirely upon this remoulding of the woman's body. But was Pandora ever meant to live quietly among men? Dr. Close names his creation 'Pandora' even before he discovers the crystal box she keeps hidden in their closet. This box disappears after she is killed but before the doctor can look inside it. The doctor and Pandora live together in happiness—he the master, she the servant. However, his masculine world is destroyed when this new wife is murdered next to him in their bed. The doctor must run off and find her killer because the police half suspect him. In his search for Pandora's missing body and for her murderer, Noah loses his grasp on the empirical, rational world of the medical community and comes to rely upon the supernatural visions of Venus, a

willful 'private investigator' (50).

The box, made out of opaque glass, has 'a criss-cross of iron bars webbing it, and a butterfly clasp for a lock' (21-22). The shape of the criss-cross on box symbolises the female chromosome and implies that men are curious about female sexuality but cannot fathom its depth; although Noah constantly traces Pandora's mysterious box, believing it to contain something of great worth, he finds it empty in the end. Its contents remain such a secret that he eventually tries to break the tight box in order to access her thoughts. However, as Noah becomes increasingly curious regarding Pandora's past and thoughts, she becomes more and more distant. His curiosity at last transforms into anxiety when a letter arrives for Pandora on the day of their first wedding anniversary. The words of the letter read, 'DO NOT BE AFRAID OF WHAT YOU WANT' (27); Noah is afraid to think that Pandora might disappear as strangely as she arrived. The glass box is fragile, transparent and barred with iron, thereby symbolising Pandora's vulnerability and also her imprisonment within Noah's patriarchal world.

Pandora's disappearance urges Noah to embark on a journey that takes him far from his scientifically ordered life and towards a private investigator named Venus. The less-than-human Venus embodies the goddess of love; she sensationally reflects Dr. Close's amoral desires and ironically mocks his demands to ascertain the male ideal of woman. The detective Venus is more a shape-twisting animal than a sensible woman. When Noah kidnaps her and forces her to be involved in the search for Pandora, Venus occasionally changes her shape either to escape from Noah or to obtain some demonic vision that then leads Noah towards his wife's murderer:

Suddenly her arms and legs sprang out like a mechanical toy, as simultaneously her back flung back in a rigid curve. Jerking movements seized her whole body in what seemed to be an epileptic fit. Foam whorled out of her mouth and streamed down over her lips and chin. The foam

became pink, as blood from where she had bitten her tongue tainted its spume. While her eyes filled with tears as if her flesh were turning into liquid, her skin glowed red as if being burnt by flames. (69)

This inhuman 'jerking like a dervish' (69) mirrors Noah's greedy lust for female flesh.

Neither an obedient nor manipulative creature, such inhuman characteristics emerge in sharp contrast to Noah's aspiration for the idealised female body: 'magic and her imagination seemed to be her only sphere of influence' (83). Until meeting Noah, Venus led a life of solitude. She did not want her gift of 'vision' to be threatened by any single person, let alone by such an intractable man. Kristeva mentions how such revolt is the transgression of a prohibition; she also indicates how this kind of revolt is at work in an aesthetic and analytical experience:

The return, or access, to the archaic as access to a timeless temporality . . . prepares us for benevolence. Isn't a good analyst one who welcomes us with benevolence, with indulgence, without scores to settle, calmly, in a lowly dwelling, as Freud says, and this sense, a revolutionary one, giving us access to our own 'lowly dwelling'?²¹

The transgression of a prohibition involves a revolt that is the a return to the archaic (our human desires). This 'lowly dwelling', dependent upon basic and unrestricted human impulses, suggests a revolt as a displacement. Venus's inhuman transformation into a dervish-like beast, offers a precise counterpoint to Noah's lustful possession of idealised female flesh. Her protest against the ideal female body is displaced by the devilish power to transform one's appearance; Noah's desire to obliterate his feminine side is displaced by his ability to conquer the female body. Both displacement games suggest a civilised revolt of humanity via a return to the introspection of barbarian human desire.

Out of the hot, dry desert, Venus leads Noah towards the lush depravity of Las

²¹ Quoted in Ernest Jones. *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*. (New York: Basis, 1957), 3: 204. Kristeva, Julia. *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt: the powers and limits of psychoanalysis*, Vol. 1. Trans. Jeanine Herman. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 15.

Vegas. This place is filled with gamblers and implies that nothing is what it seems, most particularly Lazarus (an artistic body sculptor, and the abductor of Pandora), who presides, dark and seductive, over the casino. Convinced that Lazarus holds the truth about Pandora, Noah pursues shifting shapes and visions (as provided by Venus) with such reckless passion that he endangers all those who are caught up in his search. Ultimately, it is Noah's fate to be damned and saved by the same truth: 'He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow' (52). Two weeks after Venus' mysterious disappearance, Noah finds her sitting opposite him in the casino:

She was wearing a diamond studded dress and diamond earrings and this time her face was perfectly painted over. *What had Lazarus done to her?* The sequins of her glass-white dress refracted the lights of the casino so she seemed more light than human. . . . Venus' power of enchantment had turned to herself—she had cast a spell of beauty over herself. She looked like an immaculate version of femininity. (108)

Lazarus' material decoration of her body satirises Noah's surgical remoulding of Pandora's body. Lazarus brings to his studio, which is a temple built outside of Las Vegas, many beautiful women who never again emerge. Lazarus' 'exquisite indentations' (112) of female sculptures arouses Noah's fetishistic desires:

Noah caressed them [Lazarus' sculptures] like fetishes, ran his fingers along their edges, his lips, tense, following their line. His eyes concentrated both on their curves and the sensation of touch, their brittle, fluid form. He suddenly felt scared. Scared of the power of their form, and the pleasure he was taking in them. Pleasure still seemed strange to him. (112)

This desire for the female body is familiar to Noah. The pleasure, however, seems to involve a guilty sense of creation and a reflective image of himself. Noah's uncertain identification with his hidden Other brings about the recognition of his own justified treatment in gendered relationships. Regarding this revolution in mentality, Kristeva says that:

I feel as if a new humanity were being instituted—or unearthed. I'm

speaking of another language, another mentality, another being—a genuine ‘revolution’ in mentalities.²²

Kristeva stresses that each individual’s mentality is a version of humanity and is unstable for its continuous revolution—reflects a subject-in-process. In fact, it is the unstable nature of revolution that brings about the most profound dimensions of humanity. Human relationships depend on dynamic interactions, rather than upon one-sided moments of give and take. Pandora’s missing body (the idealised female body by men) and Venus’s supernatural assistance in the search for a body (a man’s mysterious quest by the half-inhuman woman’s power)—both refers to a woman’s powerful allure when it comes to the masculine search for something that lies beyond their view of women. Noah’s previous male pleasure in fetishistic passion alters after the journey towards discovering the ideal. Pleasure can here be ascribed to the feminine, instead of to the male sense of possession. Noah’s internal contradictions occur when he enjoys this pleasure in possession, but he is simultaneously able to recognise the rejection of his own feminine tenderness.

Noah’s discovery of an unrealistic serenity (through the creation of the female body) reaches its height when he at last finds Pandora’s box to be empty:

To his surprise the lid opened easily and he peered inside. Letting the lid fall shut again, Noah fell down into the fountain, on his knees, the water up to his neck and for the first time since Pandora’s death he surrendered to grief. He wept, as if his heart was breaking. (135)

Noah’s weeping is a feminine reaction wherein he finally embraces his internal Other. It is ironic that this abjection of the feminine Other inspires him to then create an ideal female body that will fulfill his masculine idealisations. His male narcissism collapses when he confronts both the long-term rejection of his feminine side and his adoration for the masculine.

²² Guberman, Ross, ed. *Julia Kristeva Interviews*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 261.

Noah's search for Pandora has more to do with a playing out of his male narcissism than for the love of his wife. Just as in the case of Lazarus' indifferent decorations, love stands 'outside his sphere' (141). Lazarus mirrors Noah's weakness that is 'inherent in those who wanted to win' (143) and to possess. Noah's weak identity originates from his single-minded idealisation and he desperately needs to find his fetishistic object.

5.3.2 *The Painted Female Body and Male Trauma*

In *Justine*, Thompson's characterisation of moral twins completely fuses polar moral absolutes and creates dangerous gorgons (both beautiful and evil women). The beginning of *Justine* alerts us to this fact when it opens with a quotation from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend

The lunatic, the lover and the poet,
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is the madman, the lover, all as frantic
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
And as imagination bodies forth
The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.²³

The epigraph anticipates the novel's theme, which points towards the literary tradition of moral pairs. It implies that certain male characters, those struggling to control and

²³ Thompson, Alice. *Justine*. (Edinburgh: Canongate books, 1996), vii (epigraph).

to understand reality, are opposed by female moral gorgons who lead them through paths of destruction and discovery. In the novel, gender identity slowly crumbles as the narrator's ability to comprehend reality collapses.

The narrator of *Justine* is an art collector, who worships beauty for his own ideal, and endeavors to possess artistic works at any cost. In his mind, the image of Justine represents a perfect woman of his own creation:

She did not know that in reality she needed me in order to exist,
that without the concentration of my thoughts she was just a phantom. It
was something that I would have to teach her. (*Justine*, 18)

In his role as creator of 'life', the man here prescribes an arbitrary requirement for women: she must let him write over her as on a '*tabula rasa*' (28), or paint all over her as on a 'blank canvas' (96). Then the narrator meets Justine's twin sister Juliette. The opium smoke grows thicker as he uses a relationship with Juliette in order to move closer to her cold and distant twin. During their first meeting in the National Gallery, the narrator and Justine's sister are attracted to the same painting, Uccello's *St George and the Dragon*. For him, the picture amounts to a wonderful work of art and reveals a man's proper reward for brave action; Juliette sees it with different eyes. For her, men have only invented such dragons in order to slay them and so that they might be rewarded with the hand of a beautiful princess (21). In western culture, dragons represent female passions. Just like George slays the dragon (defeating the female passions) in order to win his female lover in courtly love,²⁴ the male narrator in *Justine* hopes to conquer his feminine Other by objectifying his ideal into a painting. To his blindness to his own abjection of his maternal side, the male narrator, nevertheless, cannot obliterate the shadow of his maternal trauma.

The narrator encounters Justine at the London National Gallery and sees her flee into a private library. Justine, her twin sister and counterpart, assists Justine in her

²⁴ See Michael Ferber's mythical tales.

plans. In the end, however, Juliette is just another mask worn by Justine in order to take revenge on the male sex. In contrast to her sister, Juliette represents a woman's darker side. She is consistently associated with female symbols like the night or the moon. Furthermore, Juliette stands for the sexuality that is denied to Justine:

I watched as she began to move her hands over the sepia print of the dress, stopping at her breasts to touch her nipples, or rubbing between her legs, the material crunching up wetly between her body. Her face was flushed and her mouth open, but her eyes did not leave mine once. The background noise of the chaos, the darkness, the warm smells, the inane tinkling of the piano were all instantly contributing to my heightening arousal. (38)

However, the narrator's sexual desire for Juliette is merely consumptive; his inability to take charge of her sensational sexuality can never release his own existential anxiety. The narrator starts to believe that Juliette is a witch when the expression on her face begins to look increasingly surreal: 'She was like a cracked mirror, always self-reflecting an image that was deformed' (35). From the moment of his encounter with Juliette, the story involves a complicated network of gender identification and role reversals. Longing to exploit Juliette's attraction for purposes of reaching Justine, the narrator discovers, to his disappointment, that he has become a victim in turn: 'I felt violated by the act of sex that had taken place in Juliette's flat. That Juliette had been using her body as a means to an end made the whole encounter seem even more obscure' (49). The narrator's revelation shows readers a complicated male desire for the female body. On the one hand, he desires a passionate woman to fire up his sexual desire; on the other hand, he fears that this sexually powerful woman might gain dominance over him. His trauma about the feminine Other constantly reminds him that his feminine side makes him a victim by his mother at her mad whipping for his appearance's imperfection in childhood. Although he longs for female passion, he prefers a cold female chastity (as embodied by Justine) in order to regain his

masculine dignity.

The plans of the dangerous woman gradually reveal a criminal intent. The narrator is not satisfied with Justine's portrait alone; he longs to possess her in flesh and blood:

I wanted to paint a picture of her in my head with her lifeblood. The living Justine grew pale and empty with dry sockets and collapsing skin. Vampiric, the new image of her in my head sucked out her lifeblood in order to live afresh in my mind. (70)

His perversion recalls Count de Gernande's vampiric inclinations in de Sade's *Justine*, (he obtained pleasure by bleeding his wives to death). At the same time that the narrator feeds his obsession with Justine's substance, he accuses her of having bewitched him. Justine embodies two contradictory images: she is an icon of perfect beauty and of inoffensive sexuality—she is an innocent doll/victim, on the one hand and a seductive witch/monster, on the other. Later in the plot, when Justine simulates her own imprisonment, the narrator plays Prince Charming and tries to save her from her abductor (Jack), another monster with whom he also identifies. In the end, he realises that neither Justine nor Juliette are actually lost:

It was Justine. The abductor must have imprisoned her in the center of the maze. But a few moments later the woman stood up and calmly began to make her way out of the maze, following its twisting configurations unerringly, as if she had known its secrets since a child. (112)

This first person memoir also casts a sinister light on the relationship between the narrator and his mother. Throughout his childhood, his mother could never accept his malformation and found her son's appearance to be unbearable. This fact reflects an early symptom of the disturbing bond between mother and son as well as a shared obsession with ideal beauty. The narrator's love of beauty is acknowledged in terms of a voyeuristic attraction to his mother: 'She would be sitting, half-naked at the mirror, her round full breasts reflected in the glass so that I could feast upon them

from every angle' (4). The attraction towards his own mother reaches its peak one night in the narrator's thirteenth year. The heat of his bed had drawn him outside where he has a peculiar vision of his mother standing on the terrace of their mansion:

Like a ghost, my mother, in transparent silk, her back turned to me, stood on its wide steps. One of her pilgrims stood beside her, his face reflecting blankly the light of the moon. From the centre of the cool water of the lake, I watched this strange man shut his forget-me-not eyes, as with her mouth she plucked out his heart through his open lips. (6)

The reference to the number thirteen and to the vampiric actions performed by his mother's apparition contributes to an aura of strange black magic. This sinister marriage of death and beauty haunts the narrator from the earliest stages of his childhood. This cult of obsessive beauty reaches its height in the mother's inability to accept its end. The mother's physical decay is followed by her own mental disintegration and is revealed through the insane whipping she inflicts upon the narrator. The mutilations, reminiscent of those suffered by de Sade's Justine, are performed 'with surgical precision' (7) and emphasise the sinister aura that permeates the narrator's perception of his mother.

In *Justine*, the libertine type is introduced through the figure of the abductor (the narrator's alter ego—Jack). In the story, the narrator's obsession with Justine progressively transforms his personality; his murderous and sadistic instincts begin to arise once he believes the object of his desire to be inaccessible. His sexual fantasies about Justine rival those of the abductor until suddenly they become completely one:

Justine, naked, is chained to the black walls of rock. Her white flesh is bleeding as if someone has drawn a map of an unknown country, in red ink, on her body. . . . The abductor is bent down over her. I can make out from the movement of his back and the crack of a whiplash that he is whipping her.

'I've come to rescue you,' I say to her.

On hearing me speak, the abductor straightens up, lets his whip drop to his side and turns around. He looks straight into my eyes. But I am looking back into my own eyes, the abductor has my face. (91)

The narrator satiates his libertine desire through the abductor's sexual maltreatment of Justine; however, he finds that the libertine is no one else but himself. We may note here that the female moral twins have effectively seduced the female body. The challenge to the real/fantastic narrative has been marked to the fullest extent here. Regarding Kristeva's view of ethics (regarding the love between mother and child), Alison Ainley considers that complex love is a bridge between the semiotic and the symbolic:

[Kristeva] seems to be suggesting that the location of ethical practice should no longer lie in the reformulation and attempted perfection of rules and laws. Instead, the disruptive effect of the subject in process/on trial as it is worked out in Kristeva's theorisation points toward a different trajectory of the ethical subject. The constant transgression and renewal of the subject's positioning with regard to the process of signification *reinserts* such a subject into the transformation of community and discourse. As a consequence it seems it is the boundaries at which transformations are taking place and new practices are being forged where the focus of attention should lie.²⁵

A child's rejection of the mother forms his abjection of the maternal inside himself. The child's self-justified ethical practice reformulates the rules and laws of *his* symbolic world. The subject's world, however, is not as stable as he thinks: it operates in relation to a changing community. The narrator's hostility towards his mother's maltreatment is transformed into the negative recognition of maternity and into the horror of victimisation that is associated with this maternity. His attempts to obliterate his childhood trauma constructs a desire for visual possession of the female body (as he obsesses with the portrait of Justine) and exposes his desire to possess this female body (as he pursues Justine when she appears in the gallery and the library). The

²⁵ Ainley, Alison. 'The Ethics of Sexual Difference'. *Abjection, Melancholy and Love: the work of Julia Kristeva*. Eds. John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin. (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 53-62 (55).

narrator's return to the memory of his mother-child relationship, provides, in Kristevan terms, a way to undo the dual nature of masculinity and femininity in gendered relationships; it further suggests a love that is not just for others but for an Other—for what was once in him.

Once kidnapped, whipped, raped and symbolically castrated by Justine/Juliette, the narrator is given a clue regarding his mistakes. Justine's mystery is encapsulated in her blank novel titled *Death is a Woman*. This text is not to be *written* by man, but to be reflectively *read* by him:

I did nothing but present my image to you. Your obsession decided on a reality of its own. And ignored mine. It was this that gave me *carte blanche*. Don't blame me for your inability to read what was really going on. Your obsession subsumed my identity. (133-134)

In this way, the limits of the masculine gaze are effectively blurred. In Thompson's rewriting of Sade's moral twins, the regulatory power of libertine, subversive culture is subjected to the excess of moral nature.

Conclusion

Both of Thompson's novels demonstrate the visual construction of the feminine as a means of seduction that articulates the masculine creation of (and obsession with) the idealised female body. Female characters are re-moulded, are portrayed as fetishised objects, and forced to adopt a regressively seductive pose that then mirrors the desire of their obsessors to materially degrade their female bodies. This reversal of gender relations illustrates the moral import of the male abjection of the female body. This abjection, so closely implicated with male existential anxiety, ostensibly determines female femininity as virtuous to be either virtuous or vicious.

Through the use of both feminine beauty and the male addiction to that beauty,

Thompson affirms (at the end of these two novels) that abjection stops wherever obsession ends. This final assertion concludes with the male protagonists' self-discovery of their own destructive desires towards the fetish. The patriarchal preoccupation with female femininity does not create a harmonious gender relationship but instead endorses the unequal treatment of the female body. When psychologically threatened by the female body, which results either when the male ascertains his identity as being empirically and scientifically rational (in *Pandora's Box*) or when the male demands to disavow his trauma of lost maternal love (in *Justine*), the males are ironically captivated by, rather than in control over, their female fetishised objects.

Chapter Six

The Questing Masculine Self

Just as every time Noah built up the body, dealt in its
physical realities, he felt in some way he might get to
the bottom of the mystery of what it was to be human.
His life ran in a straight line from beginning to end and
he walked along it, unaware of the drop on either side.

Pandora's Box, 13

While the previous chapter discussed male abjection of the maternal body in the paradoxical obsession with the female body, this chapter contributes to an exploration of Thompson's *Pandora's Box*'s and *Justine*. It looks at textual adaptations from their referential works and connects the discussion of this adaptive relationship to intertextuality in Thompson. As the gender dichotomy argues against concepts of essential and unified identity (that is, against a static categorisation of femininity as weak and masculinity as strong), Kristeva's linguistic critical theory—with its emphasis on the semiotic and more particularly on the psychoanalytic—blurs the binary opposition within gender ideology. The binary forms of masculinity and femininity play a larger role in mental life than in cultural performance. Fantasies of both sexual transgression and subjection to sexual regulations, are hierarchies that have been culturally structured but that demand mental deconstruction. The mental decoding of both hierarchies remains a gripping spectacle in the parodic adaptations of the works to which these two novels allude: the mythical parable of 'Pandora's Box' and the original French *Justine*. Various methods of performing gender heterogeneity (as are demonstrated in Thompson's two novels) emerge as being extremely different from those expressed in their referential works; consequently, referents with their ideas of gender subjectivity illustrate different social and psychic

meanings in the maternal body. This chapter aims to address both of these beliefs. Each one is somehow present in the construction of gender hierarchies.

The first section (6.1) attempts to define the nature of textual allusion, and further discusses its relationship to Kristeva's concept of intertextuality. The second section (6.2) focuses upon analysing textual satire with reference to the male abjection of the female body. Through these two sections, the central argument is that the conventional concept of a moral self has been re-interpreted by a psychological self. In the cultural milieu, the patriarchal hegemony that is structured upon the philosophical speculation that surrounds the symbolic law (the male possession of the female body always obtaining control over feminine virtue, as illustrated in de Sade's *Justine* and in the mythical story of 'Pandora's Box'), is re-examined by looking at a male's passionate subjection to his fetishised sexual objects. This is more socially accepted so that he might secure his masculine identity as against the threat of female body (illustrated in Thompson's these two works). I propose that textual allusion in these two novels linguistically demonstrates the male abjection of his internal Other and that this abjection is critically interpreted through ironic allusions to two different myths concerning male sexual transgression and dominance over female virtue.

6.1 *Abridgement of Allusion and Inter-subjectivity*

Pandora's Box and *Justine* both adapt their plots from the traditional myths ('Pandora's Box'¹ and the French *Justine* respectively) to suit modern versions of dangerous women in feminine disguise. The two referential works show the male degradation of the feminine—one within the context of ancient religious beliefs and

¹ The mythic tale of 'Pandora's Box' is in reference to Hesiod. *Works and Days*. (London: William Heinemann, 1954).

the other in eighteenth-century erotic literature—and it has been re-examined by twentieth-century criticism. However, in my reading of Thompson's two novels, not only has male subjugation of women (according to earlier social norms) been defamed, but male subjection to the idealised female body has become an object of satire in the modern age. It seems there is a political alternative embedded in the search for inter-subjectivity between male subjugation and subjection to the female body; this aims to break down existing gender divisions in modern society. In other words, textual allusion here aims to defy not only male transgression over the female body (patriarchal domination of the female body in de Sade's work and the mythical tale of 'Pandora's Box') but also the male obsession with the female body (male idealisation of the female body in Thompson's *Justine* and *Pandora's Box*). Thompson protests against both extremes regarding male treatment of the female body, largely because each involves the male abjection of the feminine Other as associated with the socially restricted female body. If textual allusion offers a positionally neutral subjectivity (as a sword pointing towards both the male domination of the female body and towards the male obsession with female beauty) between that of the referential work and that of its own text, we may need to clarify the definition for the textual allusion.

Allusion has often been employed as a literary instrument to referentially connote various associations. These associations may either agree with the thought that is alluded to or they may denigrate the stratagem of the alluded concept. However, besides the benefits and drawbacks of using allusion, William Irwin suggests that the associations aroused by an 'intended indirect reference' may 'go beyond mere substitution of a referent'.² In other words, whether the subjectivity in a referential work appears either supported or interrogated by a referring work, the thoughts of this

² Irwin considers that allusion should have been a crucial topic involved in the theory of interpretation, and that it is particularly important to any discussion of intentionalist and anti-intentionalist theories. Irwin, William. 'Against Intertextuality'. *Philosophy and Literature*. (Oct 2004): 227-242. p. 227.

subjectivity may work as an apparatus of cultural or social manoeuvre. This manoeuvre demands objective evaluation by a different, though not necessarily opposite cultural milieu that somehow benefits from critical distance.

Let us take the broad meaning of allusion into account by looking at how the referring work gathers up many inferences that point towards the referent. Mary Orr takes into account Pasco's view regarding the nature of allusion, indicating that allusion, by alliance, 'suffuses and extends meaning'³ and refuses metaphoric integration. She concurs with Pasco that allusion 'does not suggest the combination with another image (or text) that will permit the metaphorical relationship'.⁴ I contend that Thompson's reinterpretation of the referential texts involves an intentional transformation and revolution of an earlier cultural notion. In literature specifically, this notion manifests itself as a textual fabrication that signifies an entire social world. What we must ask is whether or not this intentional resistance is exclusive to the author of the referring work.

In order to clarify the validity of authorial intentions in literary criticism (not only in this thesis but also in more general situations concerning objectivity), we might first look at Roland Barthes (New Criticism) who attributes most interpretation right to the readers and who considers the different ages and cultural backgrounds of particular readers and authors. In 1968, Roland Barthes proclaimed 'the death of the author'.⁵ His view regarding 'the death of the author' argues for an 'equivalence [between] . . . writing and reading'.⁶ He regards the author as a 'scriptor' who may or may not understand his scribe and who certainly does not authorise his scribe to

³ Orr, Mary. *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 139.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140. Pasco's view. Pasco, A. H. *Allusion: a Literary Graft*. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1994).

⁵ Barthes, Roland. 'The Death of the Author'. *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* Ed. William Irwin. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002), pp. 3-7. ; 'La mort de l'auteur', *Manteia* 5 (1968): 12-17.

⁶ Barthes, Roland. 'Theory of the Text'. *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*. Ed. Robert Young. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 31-47 (42).

practice the task of meaning-making.⁷ The reader then is left free to trace the relations between the scribe and any associated allusions. The authorial intent, therefore, is not as significant as a reader's understanding of the text and its references.

A reader's double-edged interpretation of the referent and its references implies an author's parodic play with generic form, as well as and with a reader's meta-commentary on the author's work. While the author replicates the generic form by adaptation that somehow stabilise his/her meaning, the reader then subverts this stability by means of his/her alternative cultural reading. Mary Orr regards this textual abridgement of allusion as a vehicle of textual 'cyclification':

cyclification may restructure oppositional movements as a double helix—pulling out one loop links it more firmly with the others in the strand—or as further amplification of the one authority undergirding all their forms. . . . Quotation's tacit marking of belief or unbelief systems thus remains the underlying authorisation that will determine how cultural productions are sustained, maintained and renewed within a heritage. It is to the constant modes of this authorisation that quotation's abridgements and cyclical bridging return, the span of its operations.⁸

This textual cyclification allows no room for parodic authority, and at the same time, broadens the span of literary interpretation. It marks the synthesis of two seemingly, but not exclusively, contradictory energies, scrutinises them by reduction, and decodes them by transformation.

We then may be curious about the linguistic role in this double-edged textual interpretation. Regarding the distinction between meaning and significance, Kristeva asserts that 'the dialogue word or utterance is double-voiced, heteroglot, and possesses a meaning (A) at the same moment that it possesses an alternative meaning

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Orr, Mary. *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 145.

or meanings (not-A)'.⁹ Kristeva considers textual meaning as a container of the signified, indicating that textual meaning (represented by the symbolic signifier) does not go against the law of non-contradiction. Although a text cannot have meaning x and meaning $\sim x$ (the semiotic signified) at the same time, it can have meaning x and the significance of $\sim x$ at the same time. The significance of $\sim x$ can be deciphered through textual signifiers, which are precisely what the text denigrates. Signifiers do not refer to anything outside the system of signifiers. With regard to language politics, the intertextual severing of the text can be thus motivated by different subjectivities as represented by the signifier and the signified. From this perspective, we may note that Thompson's intertextual severing is motivated by a subjectivity that satirically refers to the symbolic signifier, x (male sexual exploitation of the feminine as appearing in de Sade's *Justine* and in the mythical tale of 'Pandora's Box'), and that simultaneously exposes the semiotic significance of $\sim x$ (the male fear of suffering subjugation for being too feminine in the symbolic world of gender relationships as they appear in Thompson's *Justine* and *Pandora's Box*). I contend that Thompson's purpose here is to show the psychological alternative surrounding man's fear of his internal Other. Men may transform their fear through the reverse presentation of subjection to the idealised female body and this ideal-female-body fetishism may then induce a decentred subjectivity wherein the violation of the female body can stand in opposition to a more symbolic subjectivity. The seemingly opposite symptom about the male fear of the feminine Other in Thompson's two novels ironically does not obliterate man's fear of the Other, but rather makes him lose his desired power in the capture of fetishised female beauty embodied by the dangerous women.

Kristeva argues for the significance of a decentred subjectivity that is embedded

⁹ Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 43.

as an unconscious drive beneath the veneer of a conscious symbolic positioning through language.¹⁰ For Kristeva, the unconscious, semiotic dimension of subjectivity can be traced through the 'somatic aspects of language, such as the rhythmic and breathing patterns of speech, tones of expression, and silences'; she also asserts that 'this pre-self experience of the semiotic is non-gender specific'.¹¹ Since this pre-self experience has nothing to do with gender, why does Kristeva use it in place of the mother? This gendered categorisation of the semiotic as the maternal is regarded in opposition to the patriarchal symbolic order of the linguistic 'system's official[ly] *made* ideal of the "centred, self-directing agent"'.¹² Kristeva's analysis of this repressive positioning of the semiotic by the patriarchal symbolic order of language, shares an affinity with the oppression of women in modern culture. The disruption of the symbolic order not only renounces the male symbolic subjectivity, but also forces subjects to confront their ideology.

Regarding the relationship between the text and its referential work, we may rest assured that the inter-subjectivity between the referring work and its referent is worth pondering. This particular dimension of inter-subjectivity is concomitant with Kristeva's 'subject-in-process'; it not only denigrates the symbolic, patriarchal, and textual order, but also inspects the semiotic, maternal, and counter-textual order so that any misogynistic tone is parodied. This double-edged investigation (of the symbolic and of the semiotic aspects of language) challenges the partialities of symbolically overt subjectivity and of the semiotically hidden subjectivity. Thompson's textual allusion articulates a feminist reaction to the myths surrounding de Sade's sadomasochistic daughters and the male-created female figure of Pandora.

¹⁰ Elliott, Anthony. 'Kristeva on the semiotic foundation of feminine sexuality'. *Social Theory and Psychoanalysis in Transition: Self and Society from Freud to Kristeva*. (Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 219-230.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 221-222.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 223.

In both cases, the idealised female body falls prey to a patriarchal domination while ironically exposing a masculine fear of the female body and a masculine obsession with the idealised female body. This exposure ultimately makes them the victims of female seduction. Although the patriarchy of the referential works provides a counterpoint to Thompson's works, it indirectly proves the existence of the male symptom concerning cultural representation of the female body: the mythical legacy of victimised femininity produces a social shadow of the Other; this is a role that men do not want to play but that they nevertheless desire to control.

6.2 *Refusal of Authorisation*

Allusion, as discussed above, does not simply authorise the creation of a meaningful, symbolic counter-point. The ironic tone of rebellion, even against the counter-dimension, is well articulated in semiotic aspects of fictional speech. I propose that in Thompson's two novels, man's gender terror (veiled behind his obsession with the female body) is used as a satirical point to off-set the aggressive violation of the female body in 'Pandora's Box' and in de Sade's *Justine*. Although both forms are satirised, they are expressed in two radical passions (subjugation and subjection): both are symptoms of male psychic fear that emerges when the man is confronted with the female body. This fear is expressed as male self-illusion of a rational, scientific identity in *Pandora's Box*, which refers to the suppressed position of woman in the myth of 'Pandora's Box'; this fear is also illustrated in the male terror of castration in *Justine* which refers to the sexual transgression in de Sade's *Justine*. In the two novels and in the novels to which they allude, the female body becomes the icon of the feminine and marks those sites of repression whereupon the

inequalities of gender treatment cannot find conscious articulation and are displaced onto a linguistic reading of the unconscious textual fabric.

6.2.1 *Redeeming the Nature of Curiosity*

In *Pandora's Box*, the discovery of a rigid ideology behind a gender dichotomy releases more blessings than woes to Dr. Noah. This occurs despite the fact that his discovery of a 'rational obsession' (with the scientifically created and idealised female body) produces a degree of melancholy. Pandora's curiosity to discover the meaning of her existence in Noah's scientific world, as indicated by the anonymous letter reading. 'DO NOT BE AFRAID OF WHAT YOU WANT' (35) runs concurrent with the nature of curiosity in the myth of 'Pandora's Box'. Although the mythical Pandora activates all the plagues on earth when she opens the infamous box, she also brings enlightenment to the earth, releasing a certain understanding of the mixed nature of beauty and danger, of pleasure and torture.

Before patriarchal mythology transformed Pandora into a fair woman showered with gifts from 'all the gods', she was created out of clay by Hephaestus; given life by Athena; decked with jewellery by the Graces and Peitho, with flowers by Horace, with beauty by Aphrodite, and with treachery by Hermes; was given 'a gift, a sorrow to covetous man'.¹³ Hesiod says, 'I will give men as the price of fire an evil thing in which they may be all glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction'.¹⁴ Zeus tells Hermes to take beautiful Pandora to earth, as a snare and a plague to men and in order to seduce Prometheus's brother, Epimetheus (Afterthought). Prometheus (Beforethought) warns his brother to reject any gift from Zeus but Epimetheus, due to

¹³ Hesiod. *Works and Days*. (c. 700BC) (London: William Heinemann, 1954), p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

his lust for feminine beauty, still takes the gift. What he receives is not only that which he appreciates, feminine beauty, but also that which he abhors and that which will destroy all he owns. Laura Mulvey illustrates Warner's view that the figure of Pandora is one of 'artifact and artifice', and is one that combines the temptations of a beautiful body with the dangerous consequences of betrayal.¹⁵ The clay-made artifact, as a beautiful pleasure object and as the deceptive artifact of a wicked trick, condenses the mixed nature of femininity. Pandora, as a curious and mischievous temptress, opens her jar to unleash misery for the benefit of men.

This benefit derives from the recognition and revision of distinct binary oppositions. While Hesiod emphasises the disease and suffering brought about by the reception of Pandora as a gift, he also stresses how Zeus gives Pandora to man as a punishment for the crimes of Prometheus (Prometheus had stolen a tiny flame from Zeus in order to give life to mankind).¹⁶ Zeus hides men's sustenance because he is angry with Prometheus: 'Zeus devised miserable sorrows for mankind; he hid fire' (*Works and Days*, 49-50). When Prometheus then returns the flame, Zeus becomes angry and says that he will give 'a huge burden' to Prometheus and to men of a future age (*WD*, 56). Pandora, this woman of clay is used therefore as a weapon of war; she stands in the centre of a power struggle between male gods and falls victim to their warrings. Epimetheus ignores his brother's warning about the gift. Rather than sending it back 'so that nothing bad might happen to mortals . . . he took it, and then understood [the consequences] only when he had the evil creature' (*WD*, 88-89). To accept Pandora meant that he had also to accept the jar from Zeus: female curiosity cannot be separated from the nature of her existence. As a result, feminine beauty has

¹⁵ Mulvey, Laura. *Fetishism and Curiosity*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 55. In her reference to M. Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*. (London: Picador, 1985), pp. 214 and 239; Warner quotes Froma I. Zeitlin's description of Pandora as an 'artefact and artifice' to delight as well as to deceive.

¹⁶ Lefkowitz, Mary. *Greek Gods, Human Lives: what we can learn from myths*. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 25.

been equated with the jar of evil; femininity has been victimised. Pandora has been embodied as a patriarchally compliant figure that offers neither a counter-attack nor any reconciliation between male gods.

Although Epimetheus is the indirect victim in this war triggered by Prometheus, he also transgresses for his inner passions towards feminine beauty. Various forms of the plague, such as 'Old Age, Labour, Sickness, Insanity, Vice and Passion'¹⁷, rampage the earth and only Hope is left in Pandora's jar: 'thousands of sorrows wander about among men; the earth is full of evils and the sea is full. Diseases come upon men by day, and the night they travel about, uncontrolled, and bring suffering to mortals in silence, since wise Zeus took away their voices' (*WD*, 100-105). All negative passions against virtue are forfeited for the price of desire for feminine beauty; Hope is left in the jar and represents one of Zeus's plans. Hesiod is speaking of a bad kind of hope since the unavailable hope can spur men to action and console them in misfortune. Zeus, who can fulfill his will and has no personal need for hope, denies hope to 'silenced' mankind. *Pandora's Box's* allusion to this male war of outwitting deception and to the desire between male gods becomes a counterpoint to the male domination of the female body, wherein the male subjugation to the idealised female body has been satirised to the fullest extent here.

The male treatment of the female body proceeds in an opposite direction in *Pandora's Box* from that of the myth: male subjection to the object of feminine beauty, rather than male use of feminine beauty as an object in war. This marks the climax of the seduction of the dangerous woman. In the myth, Pandora's curiosity is the source of all her trouble. The tale is patterned on the Genesis story in which Eve is warned not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge. In Thompson's *Pandora's Box*, the anonymous female figure named Pandora by Dr. Noah, is artificially constructed.

¹⁷ Graves, Robert. *The Greek Myths*. Vol. 1. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960 [1955]), p. 145.

Noah's self-deception constructs his own scientific world of reason rather than emotion:

She lay still, wrapped in bandages apart from the section Noah was studying, as if unaware of his attentions. She was like a stone goddess being worshipped by a pagan, anointed and bathed, offered sacrifices, but always remaining impassive. (*Pandora's Box*, 11)

Noah's love of a cold empirical world, where only the visually perfected object might exist, stands in sharp contrast to the fire image which evokes Noah's passion and which is illustrated in Pandora's burnt body when she stands before him in his door:

Flames were licking the edges of the sky in front of him and it took him a moment to realize that there was a fire burning on the doorstep of his home. It took him a further moment to make out the shape of a shadowy figure standing in the midst of the flames, making a star pattern with its limbs. (3)

Noah's interest in the fire-burnt woman merely stems from his professional interest in the rectification of the corporeal pattern. This is evidenced through his obsession with his re-creating Pandora's body. This figure image is fully ridiculed in contrast to the myth: Pandora's perfected body is endorsed by Noah and brings pleasure to male satisfaction of his ideal of feminine beauty, whereas Pandora's beauty is utilised as a weapon of war and brings disaster to men.

Pandora's silence and housework also scorns the perfect world that Noah considers her to embody. When Pandora stitches a tapestry on canvas, the landscape she creates is 'like the backdrop of a classical Greek mosaic in the colours of the bright yellow, whites and blue of the Mediterranean' (28). This foreshadows the destruction of the earth that occurs in the 'Pandora's Box' of Greek myth. Later, Pandora again foreshadows this destruction.

Pandora had added on to the faceless woman's pubic area [of the canvas Tapestry] a huge phallus, surrounded by coarse, dark, pubic hair, each hair beautifully stitched, the tip of the erect penis stitched soft as red velvet. (29)

Such sexual involvement as reflected by the perfectly human form awakens the

masculine desire to sexually violate the female body. Noah's search for Pandora's box¹⁸ is the search for her sexuality. The fact that Noah cannot live without the presence of Pandora and her box suggests that his existence relies on his ability to dominate the sexually subjugated Other. What deserves our attention here is that the symbol of danger is displaced onto the figure of a witch (Venus). Just as the name signifies, the 'Goddess of Love' serves as an irony to Noah's passionate search for what he once created but has now lost. This search has no foundation in love, but in the destruction of love. The wild woman evokes torture and introspection in Noah's journey to discover Pandora's body and her box. When Noah trails her into the desert, he 'felt he was following her into the centre of the hottest place in the world' (71):

They reached a mountain of boulders. To his surprise, Venus started to climb them. She moved with agility, crawling hard-backed and deftly between the crevices like an insect. He watched her disappear over the mountain of boulders that tottered unevenly up into the sky. (71)

Venus' purposefully abandons Noah in the desert, her existence hindering the use of her supernatural, visionary powers. In this abandonment, Noah experiences fits of distraction: 'each manoeuvre [of climbing up the mountain] required a concentration of thought the heat seemed bent on preventing' (72). In opposition to Noah's empirically rational speculation, Venus' 'psychic world had no room for the real' (79). Her surreal association with the waves and messages that she receives from ghosts emerges as a sharp contrast to Noah's practical worldliness.

The mixed nature of good and evil is embodied in the figure of Venus through a search to discover the secrets in her box and through a search to reveal Pandora's killer. Such displacement, from the corporeal, clay-made Pandora and her jar to the connection between a scientifically re-moulded woman and the half mortal, half-divine woman in *Pandora's Box*, disrupts the deeply rooted topography of the

¹⁸ Box is slang for vagina.

feminine. Feminine beauty does not necessarily associate the external with virtue and the internal with vice. The characterisation of Venus does not fall into the bond between body and object; instead, she plays a reluctant mentor directing Noah to discover his killer within (his contradictory intents to uphold the ideal of feminine beauty, and to destroy it for its hovering haunts in the conscious).

The reality of the empty box is a cruel but liberating truth for Dr. Noah; his deepest fears can now be recognised and released. When Noah sees the glass box held by Venus at Lazarus' temple, he felt surprised that the lid opened easily:

Letting the lid fall shut again, Noah fell down into the fountain, on his knees, the water up to his neck and for the first time since Pandora's death he surrendered to grief. He wept, as if his heart was breaking. . . . Venus, from her pedestal stared out, sightless, over his head, as if she had known what he had discovered, all along. That she had known, all along, that the box would be empty. (135)

The box's emptiness suggests that female sexuality is unknowable to men. It remains a mystery. As a foil to the impact of vicious disease dispersed out from Pandora's jar in the myth, the emptiness of Pandora's glass box in *Pandora's Box* signals a fact that Noah's desire to create a female body of his own ideal is caught in an oscillation between his erotic obsession with the female body and his fear of losing his masculine, rational identity (in other words, the fear of facing a castrated masculine self). It is this fear of castration and the subsequent disavowal of the lost idealised woman (who has a controllable body) that Freud treats as the cause of male fetishism. The profound horror to face the burnt (in the symbolical sense, murdered) body is displaced onto the horror of discovering the secret of the box. While the fetishised body is highly cherished, the box contains everything that fetishism disavows. This is ostensibly evidenced in Noah's psychic identification. Noah feels comfort in the company of Lazarus (because he favours keeping women in his studio and moulding them into statues) even at the moment of finding the truth. As Noah indicates: 'to feel like

oneself again, [is] to feel risen from the dead' (127). He demands Lazarus's adept nature if he is to awaken his imaginative manipulation over the female body. Only the self's alter ego may wreck the fear veiled behind the form of obsessive subjection to the female body: 'Lazarus was nothing without his victims and he needed them in order to be born again' (143). Gilles Deleuze, when consulting Freud's interpretation of sadism, suggests that the weakness of the masochistic ego 'is a strategy by which the masochist manipulates the woman into the ideal state for the performance of the role he has assigned to her'; on this condition, the sadistic superego has its displaced pleasure with his expected state of the female role.¹⁹ From this perspective, if we regard Noah's masochistic ego as a displaced pleasure (referring to his sadistic superego), we may then say that Noah's identification with Lazarus (his feeling that man is 'nothing without' the imaginative manipulation over the female body) helps him to discover that his masochistic ego involves a sadistic desire. Although he suffers from the torture of addicted obsession, his male identity relies on female femininity being internally projected towards his scientific creation—thereby sustaining the pleasure of his sadistic superego.

As the surname of Dr. Noah 'Close' implies, Noah's obsession with his idealised female body reflects his male indulgence in the scientific world. He believes in a science that can create everything, even the human body. This blind belief causes him satiate both his male narcissism and his desire to subjugate the female body through a gendered relationship. His subjection to the female body is just an unconscious mask hiding his desire to subjugate women. We may say that Noah's subjection to the fetishised object discloses the horror of losing his own identity. This arises in turn from the certitude of a dichotomic ideology to which the fearful subject clings. Fritz

¹⁹ See Deleuze, Gilles, and von Sacher-Masoch, Leopold. 'Sadistic Superego and Masochistic Ego'. *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty, Venus in Furs*. (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 123-134 (124).

Graf claims that a myth is the representation of the central values of a society such that any analysis of myth must dissect the mythical signs against their specific cultural milieu.²⁰ In terms of this allusion, *Pandora's Box* stigmatises the patriarchal use of women as agents of power, proclaiming that Pandora's divinely created beauty presented a tricky betrayal in the myth. This has perhaps vulgarised the nature of the feminine and has degraded the social position of a female body. Nevertheless, in opposition to the aggressive manipulation of the female body in the myth, the obsessive possession in *Pandora's Box* is reified as a psychological symptom of the fear of castration—not of the body, but of the identity itself—and of losing identity as it relates to subjectivity. My intertextual reading aims to denounce the partial treatment of both texts with regard to femininity.

6.2.2 *Polarised Forms of Male Lust for Feminine Beauty*

In Thompson's *Justine*, female sexuality slips into a 'to-be-looked-at-ness' at the forfeiting to male obsession with the feminine beauty. Alluding to the Marquis de Sade's work of the same name, the novel sneers at a society in which sexual violence ruins the dignity of the feminine and in which immorality applauds the sexually aggressive, masculine woman, Juliette. What we may feel interested in is the discrepancy between these two works, wherein the twin sisters of the French original do reproach male sexual violation. The twin sisters in Thompson's work, however, stand in an alliance that exposes man's illusionary subjection to the idealised female body (this through the use of Justine's body as painted on a canvas). Justine has a twin sister (Juliette), and it is the male narrator who is increasingly unsure as to the identity

²⁰ Graf, Fritz. *Greek Mythology: an introduction*. Trans. Thomas Marier. (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 55.

of the woman he truly desires: the idealised but inhumane sister (Justine) or the relatively more intimate but emotional one (Juliette). We might want to ask if the story is about a man's obsession with a single woman, or if it is about a man's obsession with two women? Is it that the male narrator demands Justine's feminine beauty as a possessive object for his own psychic displacement (to assure himself of his masculine identity)? Is it that he requires Juliette's zealous passion for psychic compensation in order to effectively recapture the lost maternal love of his childhood?

De Sade's *Justine* contours a world of desires that expresses themselves in the form of perverse pleasures and that ultimately result in the corruption of innocence. The narrative background is located in a decadent world of pre-revolutionary France. Justine and Juliette are both orphans who are forced to leave the orphanage once they are grown. Juliette quickly takes refuge in a brothel and embarks on a prosperous career of vice and murder. Justine attempts to follow a more virtuous path but falls victim to the perverse patterns of sexuality. The virtuous Justine, who keeps up with moral rules, is the one who endures rape and humiliation. Her virtue is rewarded merely with suffering in that world outside her convent walls. Juliette, however, embraces the libertine philosophy from which her sister shies away. Upon leaving the convent, she makes the acquaintance of a few people who proceed to show her the ways of the wicked world, peppered with lengthy discussions in opposition to virtue, chastity, and all things religious.

Although de Sade's tale is an exploration of concepts that verge into fantasies of sheer excess, it exposes a corporeal world in which the actual flesh rules the revolution of nature: not only the nature of life, but the nature of humanity. The analysis of de Sade's original intentions in fabricating this eighteenth-century work, however, is not the primary focus of this analysis. If horror illuminates the darkness of the de Sade's sexual world, it is a similarly perverse pleasure that Thompson's *Justine*

wants to flout; *Justine* aims to repudiate, through the modern sexual relationship, this pinnacle culture—this decadent history at a certain age. The feminine virtue that is embodied in the figure of Justine can never win as much appreciation as the masculine subordination that is embodied in the figure of Juliette. Femininity is therefore an imperative issue in discussing the trigger behind the crime.

The question of femininity again emerges as an ambiguous topic for the struggle that surrounds the ideology of gender dichotomy. What deserves our attention is the problem that comes into play when femininity connects with female beauty. To be a beautiful woman is to be automatically and doubly defined as ‘Other’, and therefore to be placed at a disadvantage in a man’s world. Particularly in de Sade’s decadent, class-distinct age, the comfort of one class depends on the misery of the other. Women need to compensate for being born into a patriarchal world and do so by entering the world of men, specifically the world of the rich, in order to prevent poverty.²¹ In Angela Carter’s view, the patriarchal law is unjust not only because it oppresses women, but because it confines its power to a single dominating class. In other words, it is not one side of the gender divide that oppresses women, but the material advantage that one group has over the other. As Carter indicates:

... the moral Juliette’s life suggests the paradox of the hangman—in a country where the hangman rules, only the hangman escapes punishment for his crimes.²²

In Carter’s analysis of de Sade’s *Justine*, women are the sacrificial victims of men, particularly when it comes to issues concerning economic power. Such economic exploitation can be discerned in de Sade’s *Justine* when both girls are cast out of a nunnery for lack of funds. Juliette turns to prostitution, thieving, and eventually, murder; Justine, on the other hand, refuses to compromise her virtue and is rewarded

²¹ Carter, Angela. *The Sadeian Woman: an exercise in cultural history*. (London: Virago Press, 2000 [1979]), p. 78.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 99.

with abuse and betrayal. Juliette's poor moral scruples are rewarded with a life of luxury.

From this perspective, viewing the marriage of social wealth with sexual exploitation, we may say that the economic subordination of the female body helps the reader to understand the male narrator's obsessive passion with Justine's body in the painting. The revelation of his obsession with the painting, and of his quest for Justine's physical company in the London gallery, charts the border between contempt and desire. When observing the portrait of a female figure, he reveals in:

Her hard pale eyes, set wide apart in her face, contained the knowledge that nothing was of any consequence outside of how she looked. Her gaze did not look directly at me, but coyly, to one side. This meant I could look at her to my heart's content. By looking away she put herself even more on display to me. This oblique sacrifice of herself sealed my love. (*Justine*, 10)

The male narrator's opium-seasoned hallucinations generate his male passion for a silent female beauty. The image of silence symbolises a corporeal castration, even though it permeates the air rather than the body. This psychic subjection serves as an ironic denial of the lady's real existence: 'She did not know that in reality she needed me in order to exist, that without the concentration of my thoughts she was just a phantom' (18). Readers can discern how the narrator's ego glows and how, in this psychic state, he stands upon uneven ground: he is actually quite afraid of the aggression brought about by the female body. He says, 'She had a smudge of red paint on her cheek near her left ear, that looked like blood' (21). 'The left' symbolises the aggressiveness of a castrating body that may both murder and be, itself, brutally murdered. 'The left' is a Latin word that suggests the political transgression of social rules as well as the sinister subversion of social taboos. Female aggression is obscured by her expected social performance but is expressed through her seduction; because of her actions, men are forced to confront their own subjugation.

The figure of Juliette (in the French original) is characterised as a childish woman: 'Juliette's child-like movements and disturbed sexuality' release 'the smell of burning wood' (22). When discussing a mural with Juliette, the narrator remarks upon 'the extraordinary power of women over men. Women are without question the more dangerous sex' (27). Juliette replies, 'Men *make* women dangerous' (27). This response mocks the figure of Juliette in de Sade's work, wherein Juliette's perversion is the result of a wealth-worshipping society and her prostitution is a form of victimisation by men. Thompson characterises Juliette as an ardent woman searching for passion and Justine as a wounded bird who lacks her sister's energy for life: 'Transferring the bird to the tight grasp of a single hand, with the other hand, Juliette began gently to stroke the bird's neck' (31-32). The narrator comments upon Justine's existence: 'Her only way of living in the world was to be locked up inside it. Imprisonment was form of rescue for her' (32). The narrator praises the lifeless existence of Justine and despises the human liveliness of Juliette:

Already I could see that what lay beyond Juliette's desperation, her clumsiness, her seriousness, was her encroaching self-consciousness. It crippled her identity, deformed it, crystallised and then shattered it. She was like a cracked mirror, always self-reflecting an image that was deformed. (35)

Juliette's lust for worldliness plunges her into a life of crime for fun and profit. This again plays upon criminal patterns of behavior that define Juliette in de Sade's work. The irony climaxes when Justine writes her first novel *Death is Woman* (40). Falsely speculating upon Juliette's mind, the narrator thinks that Juliette 'perceive[s] herself as the failure and Justine as the success. Each needed the negation of the other' (42). However, readers know that this is a male prejudice that is oppressing the maternal liveliness and pleasure.

This perverse appreciation for deadly life exists not only in the narrator's mind,

but also in the mind of an entire modern society. The narrator observes the following:

I blocked out the letter from my memory. However, over the next few days London's violence seemed to intensify accordingly, became its very heartbreak. The tensions in the streets had been normalised by the words of the letter, become part of a larger pattern. Everywhere I now looked I saw the imagery of death. On television, in newspapers, in film. As if the imagery of the world had come up to meet my own private world. (85)

The ruthlessness of the outside world reigns in the aesthetic pleasures of the narrator's inside world. Nevertheless, the wealthy collector's addled brain, starting to introspectively examine relations between the external and internal world, begins to recognise that his self-justified knowledge about the twin sisters is as falsely structured as Jack's:

It was Jack who was the true monster, not the abductor. It was Jack who was incapable of passion. . . . The abductor shared with me an overwhelming passion for Justine. Jack, however, had retained total self-control. He was not made vulnerable by the power of his obsession. He was not one of us. How could *his* cursoriness compete with the concentration of our ardour? *He* was the one that should be punished. The realisation had come suddenly but had crept over me with the inevitability of the truth. (92)

This realisation deepens while the narrator admits that 'My desire, once consummated, would justify reality' (110).

But how is this desire produced? It derives from the disdain of the mother for her son's deformity and from the withdrawal of her maternal love. The narrator traces his own falsification:

My anger was a reclamation of my identity: my rage fought against the world of Justine that I slipped into, had been slowly sliding into like quick sand from the moment I had first seen her. (124)

The resentment towards his mother and his hesitancy to confront her decaying beauty, both control his emotions towards Justine: 'I thought at first it was Salome. Justine was wearing a black veil which transparently clothed her naked body' (130). He

confesses that he '[I] hung on to my anger against her. But my anger only reinforced my desire' (131). This 'blissful emptiness of surrender' (132) effectively covers his fear of corporeal castration, that fear by which his self-dignity has ironically been destroyed.

Conclusion

The two novels attempt to disrupt the border between virtue (femininity) and vice (masculinity) by alluding to beliefs as held in the ancient mythologies of 'Pandora's Box' and *Justine*. In order to defy the patriarchal view that renders Pandora's curiosity a criminal action, Thompson's *Pandora's Box*, re-claims her curiosity in order to trace the meaning of a woman's existence in a patriarchal society. This reveals prejudiced gender divisions and an understanding of the woman's body as it has been used in masculine power struggles. At the same time, the female body is adored in *Pandora's Box* in order to reveal the patriarchal desire for a rationalised masculine identity. Pandora's mythical jar and Pandora's box in Thompson's work, both destroy that particular gender dichotomy (virtuous / feminine, vicious / masculine) wherein gender identity is performed rather than born: both present a dangerous, subversive woman in the disguise of feminine beauty. The nature of female curiosity does not lead to a devastating destruction of the male world, but to an intellectually pleasurable fall.

The narrator's terror of evoking his memory of his childhood trauma is also masked by a more symbolically accepted patriarchy—by his obsessive subjection to a feminine beauty presented in a painting. The narrator's existential anxiety is rekindled by the appearance of the painted woman, Justine, and, as Anderson suggests, leads to

certain 'conventions of [the] Sadeian Gothic'.²³ These conventions, however, are borrowed in order to satirise sexual perversion as it is nurtured by a French decadent world. Thompson ridicules Sadeian gothic conventions (specifically those that expose the 'terrifying feminine') through the use of modern customs that appreciate femininity through the lens of fetishism. Ultimately, because there exist two subjectivities that permit different treatments of the female body, readers may be assured that there exists an inter-subjectivity that denies any form of gender-divisive ideology.

²³ Anderson thinks that Thompson's *Justine*, following Carter's lead, engages with the constructions of femininity. Anderson, Carol. 'Emma Tennant, Elspeth Barker, Alice Thompson: Gothic Revisited'. *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Eds. Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 122.

Part Four

Gendering Vindication: Hero or Villain?

Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) ruptures time and blurs the boundary between reality and illusion. The story of lower-class life in an industrial suburb south of London has a superficial realism that is undercharged by the 'balladic' promise of its title and by the characterisation of its anarchic demonic *hero* or *villain*, Dougal Douglas. This controversial duality of a Satanic (evil-seductive) character who invokes fantasy into daily life, is characteristic of Muriel Spark's delight in playing the game of fiction and realism, and of her refusal to follow the traditional time scheme of fiction. My argument in Chapter Seven will centre on the implication of the boundary between fiction and realism, and on how this implication contributes to the justification of a villain as a demonic hero.

With his Scottish name and his claim to be a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, the figure of Dougal suggests that the kind of ballad in question may be a more traditional one, such as 'The Demon Lover' or 'Thomas the Rhymer'. Such balladic poems, with their great narrative economy, make use of laconic dialogue and stylised description, while at the same time introducing folk scenes of love and death and often of violence and the supernatural. They are transmitted via oral tradition and are generally modified in the telling. All of these qualities can be found in *The Ballad*, thereby affirming the connection between its story and the underlying folktale tradition; they draw specific attention, at both the beginning and the end of the tale, to the way in which a twentieth-century urban community shares a vigorous life with folklore and legend. An illustrative episode in the novel, one strikingly associated with the passionate but failed love affair of folktale tradition, is seen through the

crowd of rumors that surround the failed wedding ceremony:

But in any case, within a few weeks, everyone forgot the details. The affair is a legend referred to from time to time in the pubs when the conversation takes a matrimonial turn. Some say the bridegroom came back repentant and married the girl in the end. Some say, no, he married another girl, while the bride married the best man. It is wondered if the bride had been carrying on with the best man for some time past. It is sometimes told that the bride died of grief and the groom shot himself on the Rye. It is generally agreed that he answered 'No' at his wedding. That he went away alone on his wedding day and turned up again later.

(*The Ballad*, 14)

This single event—a failed wedding ceremony—has given rise to a crowd of rumors. This confused situation parallels Dougal's ghost-writing of the memoirs of an elderly actress, Maria Cheeseman; in writing her memoirs, he fabricates, from out of his own experience and from the experiences of the people he meets, the 'true' story of poor old Cheese, whose character is then located uncertainly between illusion and reality. The lack of any third-person reflection on psychological authenticity obscures, but at the same time, clarifies the readers' evaluation of the characters' 'vision'. Each of these human inventions urges us to ponder the validity of reality. If there exists only one question, it might be: who are the villains who are making chaotic rumors? It begins to seem as though the story of suburban alarms, deceptions and confusions, is a commentary on the nature of fiction and its power to lead astray. If the deceptions are a reflection of human desires, we may ascertain that fiction is another name for lies, and that the liar as a Satanic character can be regarded as a demonic hero, for he exposes human moral disease.

The ambiguity of fiction and reality governs the whole novel, and this implication results from a devil-like character's 'human research' (*The Ballad*, 18). Dougal, through 'human research' of his belief that 'Industry and the Arts must walk hand in hand' (15), causes Peckham's inhabitants to isolate, but in fact intensifies,

their improper personalities and desires. Dougal performs human nature's experiment with artifice in an industrial society, declaring that 'we all have a fatal flaw' (29) and seeking this in everyone. Dougal's manipulative experiment succeeds because humans find his devilish seduction irresistible. In *The Ballad*, Spark makes Dougal trigger the inner evil motives of the citizens of Peckham, and alerts her readers to distrust the notion that 'advice' or words can provide truth. From the perspective of Dougal's demonic passion for the advice to Peckham's citizens, we may claim that Dougal's passion is a necessary counterpoint for the citizens' decent but oppressed manners. Their manners conceal immoral tendencies and actions, such as Humphrey's flight from a wedding ceremony and Mr. Druce's murder of his lover.

Regarding the duality of evil and good, Spark, commenting on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), claims that the monster's 'emotions reside in the heart of Frankenstein, as does Frankenstein's intellect in him'.¹ In her view, intellect must depend on the understanding of reasonable human emotions, and if an individual separates the one from the other, then danger will result. The monster's need for human emotions stands to reproach Frankenstein's arrogant, intellectual passions. If Spark extols the monster's conscientious punishment of his creator, Frankenstein, then I may infer that Spark's modeling of the figure of Dougal, who invents 'advice' to defy social hypocrisy, acknowledges Satan as being responsible for the diabolic initiation of the human 'Fall' and for mankind's then mature knowledge of its fatal flaw. Spark exalts the position of the devil who commits criminal acts as shown in *Frankenstein*:

After the creation of the Monster, since Frankenstein loses to him an integral portion of his being, his character is a study, and a well-executed one, in the mounting obsession of a lost soul to find itself.

¹ Spark, Muriel. '*Frankenstein*'. *Mary Shelley*. Modern Critical Views. Ed. Harold Bloom. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), pp. 11-30(30).

But the Monster's development is a larger proposition than Frankenstein's. He does not, like Frankenstein, inherit a civilised way of thought—he inherits nothing but life itself, and the whole gamut of mankind's journey from savage to modern times is played throughout the years of his life.²

If the monster's journey from its savage innocence to modern revenge is precisely the reverse of Frankenstein's journey from the civilised intellect to barbarian violence, then the relationship between Dougal and the inhabitants of Peckham in *The Ballad* shares similarities of this reversal: Dougal's journey is from the mischief affectivity to irresponsible flight, while the inhabitants' journey is from blind innocence to violent punishment. The monster's self-loathing ugliness in *Frankenstein* does not reveal an authentically devilish trait, for it is through the creator's irresponsibility that we sense in them the moral disease. Also, the strange bumps on Dougal's deformed head do not equate him with a demon, but rather it is through the citizens' desires to follow his 'advice' that readers discern the underlying immoral motives.

Russell Kilbourn mentions that the monstrous is often defined 'according to either of two categories generally conceived of today as culturally determined and therefore never fixed or universal: standards of beauty, on the one hand, and notions of the "human", on the other'.³ As regards internal evil, I shall define the monstrous in *The Ballad* according to notions of the 'human', since Dougal's deformed appearance signifies common human failing. Dougal's appearance exposes Peckham residents' hypocritical gender manners and behavior. Only through the exposure of immoral gender treatment of Peckham's inhabitants can the demoralised values of Peckham be revealed. In Chapter Seven, using Kristeva's gender view of abjection, I shall analyse how Dougal's invented 'advice' implicates Peckham residents' gender

² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³ Kilbourn, Russell J. A. 'American Frankenstein: Modernity's Monstrous Progeny'. *Mosaic: a Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*. September (2005): 167-184. p. 170.

treatment and confuses individual recognition of the 'truth'. I will then further explore the linguistic intertextuality of *The Ballad* and *Frankenstein*, specifically in terms of the satirical demonic spirit.

Chapter Seven

Monstrosity: Seduction and Revelation

Dougal posed like an angel on a grave which had only an insignificant headstone. He posed like an angel-devil, with his hump shoulder and gleaming smile, and his fingers of each hand widespread against the sky. She looked startled. Then she laughed.

The Ballad of Peckham Rye, 30

After examining male maternal abjection and the search for an idealised female body in Thompson's novels, I now choose Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) to reflect upon two other dimensions related to male anxiety over women: sexuality and familial intimacy. Of all the novels written by Spark, the illusion between reality and imagination has often been the most alluring feature for her readers. A. L. Kennedy has also dealt with this in *So I am Glad*, thus allowing her female protagonist to engage in mysterious communications with a ghost figure who has with the same sense of isolation and unfamiliarity. The indifference to the external violence allows Kennedy's characters on the way to their self-recovery of the trauma, by interactions with different sex, but with the same mental symptom. When contrasted with Kennedy's work, Muriel Spark's illusion seems to possess the destructive power of an external world of indifference (resulting from internal violence and coming *before* the construction of self-knowledge). Her illusion, however, also functions to unmask human indifference beyond a sense of fear concerning the other sex.

Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* exemplifies the idea of male blind illusion for maternal love under the control of patriarchy, along with the fear of an over-familiarity with women and with himself. Spark was writing decades before Kennedy. This may perhaps explain why she chooses a male devilish character to

show other men's problems in gendered relationship and also in Douglas himself. Kennedy at the end of the twentieth-century counts more on the mutual cure between the two sexes than does Spark. She makes a lost woman living in a contemporary era, annoyed with media's indifferent reports of social violent incidents without real human concerns. Her female protagonist encounters with an over-idealistic military ghost in the seventeenth century, who possesses not only the passions towards national military creeds but also a nihilist's sense for life. We may say that while Spark trusts the function of devilish character's destructive power on the way to healthy revolution of the world more, Kennedy expects more of the obliteration of the internal obstacles existing in the gender relationship.

Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* exhibits traits which qualify the devil figure for a mythic mission to bring 'vision' to the gritty industrialised town of Peckham. Dougal turns ordinary town events into extraordinary fantasy. Hired by one of the town's textile plants to take charge of 'human research', Dougal sets out to discover the town's spiritual well—it is glorious history. Once he has observed and classified the kinds of morality he finds in Peckham, Dougal is convinced that 'the moral element lay at the root of all industrial discontents . . . ' (82). 'Vision' (64) is an all-consuming concept for Dougal. As used in the novel, it connotes the ability to see past the existent world and to reconstruct a superior one in its place. This spiritual concept is (in his view) 'the first requisite of sanity' (64), and he judges from the character of the company's personnel director. He declares that every person has such a 'fatal flaw' (42). In Spark's *Ballad*, these fatal flaws are shown to readers through conversations that take place between / among characters, rather than by indications provided by a narrator. Spark pointed out in an interview that this novel is narrated without any expressed feelings and thoughts, because 'feelings and thoughts are even

more emphasised when you don't mention them'.¹ Thus, readers are offered a series of incidents and conversations tinged with the moral values held by each character. It is this moral ambiguity that colours Spark's novel; and these moral values that are left by Spark intentionally to be judged openly by her readers. Is Dougal a wicked spirit, a creature from the underworld, or is he a mirror, a projection of the long-term pressured minds of Peckham residents? If Dougal's provocative human experiment entails the hidden male abjection of the female body, how does this abjection manifest itself in a desire-filled but also fearful gender relationship? It is on this point that I shall first try to shed some light.

Muriel Spark is profoundly at odds with 'publically-granted' codes of morality in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*. She demonstrates a materialistic society's moral beliefs and holds her own characters in this society at a disdainful arm's length. The characters are unalleviated by their official and domestic relationships because they are (for the most part) incapable of the self-transcendence that is required to grow or develop in response to others. The pleasure of *The Ballad* arises from the incongruous weight that her characters attach to trivia. As Hélène Cixous says, 'A macabre cheerfulness springs up from the complete absence of values'.² The pleasure of mocking the secular moral values does not come from their comparison with the counter ones, but from the sheer exhibition of their odds. Spark will never tell her readers what moral value is reproached and what deserves applause; instead, she merely displays the characters' beliefs and leaves ironic discovery to her readers. Spark's narrative achievement resides in the capacity of her readers for reflection and introspection. *The Ballad* consists largely of conversations that show the moral values

¹ Hosmer, Robert. 'An Interview with Dame Muriel Spark'. *Salmagundi*. (Spring 2005): 127-158. p. 147.

² Hélène Cixous. 'Grimacing Catholicism: Muriel Spark's Macabre Farce'. *Theorising Muriel Spark: gender, race, deconstruction*. Ed. Martin McQuillan. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 204-209 (205).

of each character; many characters' dialogues concern the devil figure, Dougal Douglas. As a monstrous character, Dougal is much more an outsider of the industrialised community than an evil-doer within it. In other words, his devil-like character triggers, rather than produces, the revelation of the evil motives inherent to certain other characters.

This particular marriage between the monstrous and the human has a thematic significance with regard to the boundary between reality and illusion; this significance seems more familiar to us as we trace this literary heritage back to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Frankenstein's monster, abandoned by his creator and outlawed by all who meet him, threatens his creator as well as human society. In this way, Mary Shelley stresses that the monster's existence, as an embodiment of devilish fantasy, is not only inevitable but blameful not only to Frankenstein but to society as a whole. The monster, as a physical anomaly, is a social pariah and a sexual outlaw. In *Frankenstein*, we may analyse the power and dangers associated with the psychological expulsion of the feminine. Shelley's narrative tests the limits of racial and sexual discrimination, finding each one to be inextricably bound to the Other and determining both to be essential for defining the perverse and the unnatural.

The first section (7.1) shall reflect on a peculiar variety of fantasy arising from Spark's unique blend of realism and fiction. I will then investigate this devilish fantasy in daily experiments as they are illustrated in the novel, showing the connection between this version of fantasy and Kristeva's view of gender abjection. I shall use Kristeva's notion of abjection to examine how the fusion of the familiar and the devilish is achieved, and to discuss how the characters' conversation over the book contributes to this fusion. I will argue in this section that a devilish character may induce the evil motives that are embedded in the society around him and may thus misdirect social behaviour. I contend that the boundary between reality and fiction

does not really exist in the novel, since the varieties of fiction uttered by characters are precisely the realities that they recognise (though they may sometimes conceal their fictional aspects). Most importantly, 'reality' is nothing more than the projection of mental realities.

In the second section (7.2), I shall explain why Spark's *The Ballad* is a social satire of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and why Kristeva's view of intertextuality can function within a comparison of intertextual deviation in *The Ballad* and *Frankenstein* in terms of the intertextual deviation. In the third section (7.3), I will intertextually explore *The Ballad* plot's deviation from that of *Frankenstein*; by satirising Frankenstein's performance of scientific masculine arrogance (for the purpose of denying his own feminine self), Spark shows in *The Ballad* that monstrosity is a social, an ethical, and more importantly a psychological category for those who threaten the community with defilement. The male characters in *The Ballad*, who bear the monstrous fantasy, subjugate the dignity of the female body in order to dissolve their fear of becoming too feminine in their domestic affections; unfortunately, the price for performing their intentions is blood and punishment.

The central argument of this chapter is that although monsters are those who are rejected by the community, they are also a group of subjects whose self-definition, for whatever reason, demands that they exist both inside and outside the community structure. The monstrous, referring here to the ethical errors of human consciousness, actually mixes boundaries between reality and illusion in both *The Ballad* and in *Frankenstein*. I would argue that 'ethical error', as a literary motif, shows Spark's concern for modern moral values and foregrounds the psychological and social dimensions of *The Ballad*.

7.1 *Moral Absenteeism and Gender Abjection*

As an 'Arts man', Dougal joins the firm of Meadows, Meade & Grindley, manufacturers of nylon textiles. He plans to work independently to 'bring vision into the lives of the workers' (16). He is told that absenteeism is a problem, but ironically, under the guise of doing research, he himself manages to do no work at all. His work becomes the making of mischief; he tells the workers to take a day off, or never to go in work on Monday mornings, instead of finding out the cause of their absenteeism. Absenteeism then goes up by eight percent. After giving troublesome 'advice', he proceeds to acquire another job doing as little work as possible with the firm of Drover Willis, also a textile manufacturer and a competitor of Meadows, Meade and Grindley. When Peckham later becomes a chaotic land of intrigue, violence and murder, Dougal escapes to Africa. He releases the inner wit in all Peckham citizens. Even though absenteeism is already a symptom of the moral disease characteristic of Peckham citizens even before Dougal's appearance, Dougal's intentional encouragement for worker absenteeism satisfies the workers' exasperation with societal hypocrisy.

Dougal acts as a catalyst which changes the actions and attentions of individual people. He declares that 'we all have a fatal flaw' (29) and plans to expose the 'flaws' of those around him:

Take the first category, Emotional. Here, for example, it is considered immoral for a man to live with a wife who no longer appeals to him. Take the second, Functional, in which the principal factor is class solidarity such as, in some periods and places, has also existed amongst the aristocracy, and of which the main manifestation these days is the trade union movement. Three, Puritanical, of which there are several modern variants, monetary advancement being the most prevalent gauge of the moral life in this category. Four, Traditional, which accounts for about

one per cent of Peckham population, and which in its simple form is Christian. (83)

These four categories of moral values illustrate the behaviour of Peckham's citizens.

Malkoff defines such equivalences:

Emotional, Mr. Druce, whose life is narrow-minded; Functional, the office typists, jealous of Miss Coverdale's special relationship to management; Puritanical, chiefly Dixie, who will do anything to save money, but who feels no guilt sleeping with Humphrey whenever she can. Of the traditionally moral, there are no examples. What the first moral three types have in common is their response to human beings as objects subordinate to other concerns.³

Each character lives in his world of values, and Dougal serves as a moral agent to trigger these values as they are held and performed, albeit unknowingly, by the residents of Peckham. The discovery of these prejudiced moral values, however, leads readers towards an awareness of these characters' mental illnesses; all point to 'A sense of Self without a sense of the Other, [that] can be psychologically and morally devastating'.⁴

In fact, Malkoff's view over-classifies the stereotyped characters. The moral values associated with a locale are more or less affected by its economic development. In other words, the bourgeois bosses take advantage of their commanding right by fulfilling their sexual desires with their employees. I contend that 'Emotional' represents Mr. Druce's sexual exploitation of the female body under the condition of sex without love; 'Functional' indicates the bourgeois class supported by the trade union; 'Puritanical' represents a frugal but impudent view on sex; 'Traditional' encompasses a small population based on Christian values. The first three categories belong to the same category and signify how economic power governs social class and leads to materialism, particularly as illustrated in the objectification of the female

³ Malkoff, Karl. *Muriel Spark*. (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 24.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 25.

body. All of these manifestations are the counterpart to the last one, the 'Traditional', where the belief of a person who is devoted to God's will and governed by the prescription of human love. This suggests that freedom merely comes from submission to God's will; however, Peckham's apparent freedom comes from economic pleasure and from power. A demonic character such as Dougal suggests freedom to Peckham's citizens through banal moralising and through his temptations that allow humans to rebel. Dougal brings disaster upon Peckham through a his use of dangerous freedom—ignorance, fighting, and murder.

Pictured as a possible embodiment of Satan, Dougal elicits from Peckham the desire for freedom from daily oppression and hypocrisy; hypocrisy functions as a mask and particularly evident in the novel is the masculine maltreatment or psychological rejection of the female body when men still desire to maintain the sexual relationship with their female partners. Dougal's two bosses, Mr. Druce and Mr. Willis, both adhere to a popular businessman's idea that the combination of arts and profit will, in the sight of their employees, make them better workers and more profitable businessmen. In fact, the two businessmen are afraid of being discovered in their own mammonism and are therefore audacious regarding Dougal's insinuations. Dougal feels indifferent to his girlfriend's disease while Mr. Druce treats his ex-wife (Merle) as a sexual, material object; Mr. Willis's mercilessly efficient methods concerning his female employees, together with Humphrey's flight from his wedding ceremony, illustrate a similar aversion to the female body.

Negotiating 'the Other within' (loathing the female body but in fact fearing the female power of domination), men in *The Ballad* seem to reduce maternity to nature, taking for granted the physical subordination of the female body. Kristeva uses the maternal body, or the other within, as a model for all subjective relations; in her view, we are always negotiating this Other within, the return of the repressed as I explained

in the Introduction. This phenomenon of negotiation reveals a subject-in-process and provides an alternative to feminist notions of autonomous masculine subjectivity. The men in *The Ballad* are never purely subjects of their own experience, but are often products, as indicated so often by their behaviour of economic competition. While diagnosing the dynamics of oppression in Peckham's inhabitants, we may observe that male identity, which is particularly tinged with a bourgeois sense of class power, is constituted by excluding anything that overwhelms man's position as dominator, even domestic affections such as romance and sexuality. This provides the rationale behind my desire to analyse men's materialistic objectification of the female body as shown in *The Ballad*.

7.1.1 *A Devil Figure as Projection of Mental Illness*

Although the modern conscience is barely been presented in Spark's novels, the devil is far from banished in her depictions of a contemporary industrialised world. Spark's devilish characters often function as providing a kind of vivisection of human psychic violence, emerging from a social tradition that advocates a lack of self-respect and a perverse pleasure in abhorring the Other, especially when it comes to the male sardonic teasing of women. Gregson suggests that the lives of Spark's characters cannot be alleviated because they are unable to transcend psychic illness, and are incapable of developing harmonious relationships with others.⁵ This is particularly evident in *The Ballad*. Spark's satirical vision underscores how human beings in contemporary society suffer from an internal violence that disturbs the precarious harmony of the Peckham microcosm. Gender issues are highlighted through fictional

⁵ Gregson, Ian. 'Muriel Spark's Caricatural Effects'. *Essays in Criticism*. 55:1 (January 2005): 1-16. p. 5.

conversations relating to the appearance of Dougal Douglas and reach their climax in a series of accidents: Mr. Druce's murder of his mistress, Dougal's flight, and Humphrey's remarriage with Dixie. We can say that Dougal is not so much a gangster who diabolically destroys the peace in Peckham, but that he is a figure who induces the fury of residents towards themselves and towards others.

We notice from the very start that Dougal does not intend to take his job seriously: the fight against absenteeism, as his boss Mr. Druce requires, is evidently not his primary concern. He slightly exhibits the superior and ironical contempt of the 'Arts Man' for the world of textile manufacturers and for the world of facts and figures. Dougal's attitude, combined with a tinge of uncanny Scottish humour towards the London industrialised world, rationally explains his eccentric fits. We may usually discern how Dougal's personality corresponds with that of traditional demonology.

First of all, his crooked shoulders are significant: devils are traditionally afflicted with some deformity when they assume a human shape. His dark curls hide two mysterious bumps on the head. These are the scars of former horns that 'a plastic surgeon sawed off' (77). Dougal, who takes care to spread rumours about his diabolic origin, shows these bumps to several characters: he drops casual remarks like 'I've got second sight' (30) or 'I'm fey' (67) and on another occasion, he conjures up a satanic dream reflection, saying, 'I was at the University of Edinburgh myself, but in the dream I'm the devil and [at] Cambridge' (50). A revealing scene also takes place early in the story when Dougal, walking through the cemetery with Miss Coverdale, plays one of his usual pranks and poses on a grave in a manner: he 'posed like an angel-devil, with his hump shoulder and gleaming smile, and his fingers of each hand wide-spread against the sky' (30). And finally there is his ambiguous confession: 'I'm only supposed to be one of the wicked spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls' (77). All these suggestions show a game being played by a young man

who is fresh from the university and who delights in terrifying people.

As the story proceeds, however, we feel that this explanation is not sufficient. Dougal's fondness for dance and music might be attributed to his Scottish ancestry. Nevertheless, if we consider his wild and foolish one-man show at Findlater's Ballroom (59-61), we are bound to find such justification inadequate for explaining why Dougal produces so much chaos. It can be argued that Dougal in simply puts these exercises into practice because of the psychological notions he acquired at university; if we consider his subtlety, however, we may understand how this view is rather weak. Even the fictional passages he writes for the "autobiography" of a retired actress, Miss Cheeseman, appear to surprisingly correspond to the facts; this greatly disturbs the poor lady: '*I didn't tell you that. How did you know?*' (89). Clearly, Dougal has placed the action of this book in Peckham so that his research on the history of the district can account for this sideline as well for his job at the factory.

Ostensibly, the function of Dougal in the novel is not intended to introduce evil into the innocent world of Peckham: before he arrives, evil is already present in every section of the community. He is a Satan figure in human shape, rather than a social advisor in Mr. Druce's firm. He serves to seduce rather than to create evil. Spark presents Dougal as a seductively satanic figure in suburban surroundings; he leads the residents of Peckham to reveal their own devilish desires—some having originated in the realm of the mind only to be translated into action through betrayal, violence, and murder. Dougal is introduced into the London suburbs of factory and office; of lower class families sitting in front of their tea and televisions; of juvenile delinquents loitering in the street; of typists and their boyfriends dancing on Saturday evenings at the sound of the latest popular tune. Dougal artfully 'plumb[s] the industrial depths of Peckham' (17), revealing Peckham's undercurrents of fraud, violence, and sadism.

It is through the dynamic interactions of Dougal, his boss, and friends that we

can observe the psychic state of the gendered abject, particularly through several male characters. First of all, there is the return of Dixie's former fiancé, Humphrey Place, who once left her at the altar before saying "I do". He now unsuccessfully attempts to offer an explanation for his strange conduct, and fights with Trevor Lomas, his former best man who has deliberately sided with Dixie. Humphrey's reappearance revives the memory, and everyone is eager re-commence the unfinished marriage ceremony. Humphrey's intentional escape from the public wedding ceremony shows his disrespect for the bride. Dougal Douglas is held responsible for the series of disasters that afflict Peckham.

We see Dougal miming a scene several weeks in advance of the intended marriage, this for the benefit of an amused Humphrey who does not guess that this pre-figures his own wedding: "Dougal . . . took the plate of bacon . . . as if it were a book . . . and he short-sighted'. Dougal read from the book:

'Wilt thou have this woman', he said with a deep ecclesiastical throb, 'to be thy wedded wife?' Then he put the plate aside and knelt; he was a sinister goggling bridegroom: 'No', he declared to the ceiling, 'No, to be quite frank, I won't'. (8)

This scene takes place in Dougal's room at Miss Frierne's. Humphrey favours the world of Dougal Douglas, a world in which people are urged to do what they wish to do, and he fails to recognise the extent of such dangerous freedom. Dixie, who blames Humphrey's initial defection at the altar on Dougal, exemplifies the typical eighteen-year-old small-town girl who, knowing that she is low on the scale of social hierarchy, tries to rise in status through misery and hard work in order to save enough money for a fine house. Humphrey, her lover, represents the average good young man intrigued by the charm and freedom of Dougal, who brings the excitement of rebellion to his dull life. Although he returns for the wedding later, his rebellious desire to refuse marriage and his defensive remarks for Dougal's world of freedom indicates in

men the fear of women and then the vindication of this fear. If Dixie fulfils her wish and saves enough money for a fine house, she will then represent a very domestic economic power. Humphrey's fear that his bride may grasp such the reality of such economic empowerment makes the readers associate Dougal's fear with his earlier comment about leaving the 'wedded wife' and putting the 'bacon' aside. The capitalist bourgeois ideal translates the woman's domestic position into a functional, rather than an affectionate, role; the gendered abject is equated with materiality.

In *The Ballad*, several material devices are used to screen what the characters say to each other from the rest of the listening word. When Merle, the head of the typist pool, and her employer, Mr. Druce, dine together at her apartment, their desultory conversation takes place as '[an] accompaniment to a documentary travel film' (52). During another dinner, he turns off the television: 'Bad for the digestion while you're eating,' he says, but the two do not speak during the entire meal. Their romance is frighteningly nothing more than routine. When Merle switches off the television again, the two go into the bedroom and take off their clothes in a steady rhythm. After Mr. Druce showers, he puts a 'wet irritable hand round the bedroom door' (54). Though she does not listen when he speaks, Merle understands why his hand is 'irritable', and she wordlessly hands him a towel. It is truly ironic that when Mr. Druce later murders Merle by stabbing her with a corkscrew, he does so above the roar of the television. Kristeva suggests that the operations of identification and differentiation are necessary for the signification of identity is prefigured in a subject's incorporations and expulsions of food in particular.⁶ The food here seems incorporated through their mutually taciturn behaviour. Mr. Druce's sexuality is fulfilled in a series of regular but ignorant acts: dining, watching, showering, and ironically murdering when he escapes a necessary conversation with Merle. This series of actions replaces the fear of

⁶ See Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1982), pp. 75-76, and also Introduction of this thesis, pp.12-13.

affection, because frank confrontation threatens to infringe upon the subject's border.

With Mrs. Druce, Mr. Druce has no dialogue at all. He tells Dougal that the two have not spoken for nearly five years. One day during lunch, she suddenly says, 'Quack, quack', then 'quack, quack', and again 'quack, quack'. Her hand is opening and shutting like a duck's bill as she tells her husband: 'That's how you go quacking on'. 'From that day to this', Mr. Druce tells Dougal, 'I've never opened my mouth to her'. Dougal asks how they communicate. Mr. Druce replies, 'Write notes. Do you call that a marriage?' (66). Mr. Druce's hatred towards Merle is a fabricated mask disguising his long-term horror of his wife. Spark leaves a great deal of imaginative space here—the duck-like wife might, to Mr. Druce's eye, be a fake figure. His fear of communication with woman parallels the closure of his emotions and thoughts to his mistress, Merle.

Mr. Druce's indifference out of his self-defense, even in his retrieved romance with his ex-wife, is somehow affected by Dougal's friendly attitude. Every time Dougal calls his ex-sweetheart Jinny, she tells him that she has to hang up because she has something cooking on the stove. Jinny always promises to return his call, even though Dougal is well aware that she does not even know his phone number. As an artist, Dougal's detachment evokes the personality of an impersonal, totally objective outsider. This lacking personality is reflected through a lack of emotional commitment, particularly in the relationship with his girl friend. When Jinny falls sick and is hospitalised, Dougal avoids her, pleading his flaw—his inability to stand any sickness—as an excuse. Predictably, this refusal costs Dougal his girl: Jinny withdraws into bitter silence.

Besides the gender problem of emotional commitment, incompatibility is also an issue that exists between the two sexes. Accepted Peckham Rye ballroom etiquette dictates that the 'girls' do not smile much or 'attend to each other's words'. It is

understood that 'any of the girls might break off in the middle of a sentence, should a young man approach her' The actual invitation to dance, however, is 'mostly delivered by gesture' (58). All rhetorical questions here veil a gender problem of incompatibility. Apparently convinced that man's communication problems can best be solved by machines, Dougal advises Merle, 'Type it out and forget your troubles. It's a nice typewriter. You'll find the paper on the table'. As she types, he lies back on his bed, remarking, 'There is no more beautiful sight than to see a fine woman bashing away at a typewriter' (129). The sardonic compliment connotes a deadening mental illness. Female beauty again is objectified into something like a working machine—like a typewriter—and the speaking female subjects seem to be praised without either words or smiles.

Quite different from the other helplessly manipulated female characters, one of Dougal's aids in his 'human research', Nelly Mahone, remains, unlike many of the other character, essentially unchanged by the town's strange visitor. Nelly's stability probably results from the fact that she readily falls outwith the realms of convention and respectability. She comments on Dougal's mischievous 'advice' saying that 'It's all clean dirt' (94). This description can apply to her moral nature as well. Even though Nelly is seen as a village idiot, she also serves as the reminder of a spiritual order far removed from the petty concerns of so many other characters. Dressed in rags, she lurks outside the pubs, screaming out passages from the Bible and praising 'the Lord, almighty and eternal, wonderful in the dispensation of all his works' (26). Spark frequently includes this oxymoronic character, a wise fool, as her spokesperson. Here it is Nelly Mahone, a half-mad street evangelist who lives in a messy, uninviting hovel with 'clean dirt'. Nelly says that

Six things . . . the Lord hateth, and the seventh his soul detesteth . . . a lying tongue . . . a heart that deviseth wicked plots . . . a deceitful

witness . . . and [among others] him that soweth discord among brethren.
(107)

If the figure of Dougal represents a 'lying tongue' which substantially fights with God's moral law, Nelly's ignorance of Dougal's human research paradoxically shows itself a 'deceitful witness' to Dougal's immoral acts.

After Nelly becomes suspicious of Dougal and refuses the money he wants to give her for spying for him, he tells her that he had a pair of horns like a goat when he was born. She says, "Holy Mary, let me out of here. I don't know whether I'm coming or going with you' (114). Dougal's 'horn story' incites Nelly's fearful response to temptation. Later, when he comes out of a film, Nelly stands outside declaring words that suit Dougal exactly: 'The words of the double-tongued are as if they were harmless, but they reach even to the inner part of the bowels' (132). As he passes her, she spits on the sidewalk. The representation of Nelly Mahone underscores the moral discord that characterises Dougal as well as Peckham. In Spark's *Ballad*, readers are often led to explore concord through an experience of discord, and to honour innocence through an experience of the devil. *The Ballad's* disordered world of alienated misfits carries a grim motif of invented moral reality.

7.1.2 *The Symbolic Meaning of the Murder and the Evasion*

The climax of the story, Mr. Druce's murder and Dougal's flight, symbolises the ultimate exertion of a profound fury and the ensuing punishment rendered upon the conscience. Dougal, as Christianson suggests, is a particularly Scottish devil, and remains a mythical figure of the ballad within the novel; utilising the ballad's style and themes, Spark's *The Ballad* is filled with 'repetitions, shifts in time,

juxtapositions of the supernatural and the everyday, and sudden death'.⁷ The devilish character Dougal might be Scottish, with his cunning stylish play between illusion and reality, but the theme is a reversal of the punished devil as he appears in traditional ballads. The devil ultimately wins over those who defy him, because the more they defy him, the more difficult he can get himself rid of the devil. This becomes a psychological problem such that the inner devil cannot be obliterated until it is confronted. The betrayal and sudden death of the devil's followers, rather than of the devil, at the end of the novel presents the style of balladic heroes in reverse to the traditional ballad form.

The most 'successfully' triggered inner devil is manifested by Dougal through his employer, Mr. Druce. Mr. Druce shows a deeply-rooted psychological complex between love and hatred. In his love-hate relationship with his secretary, Miss Coverdale, he betrays the sadistic tendencies that finally turn him into a murderer. The exertion of the gendered abject is finally performed by Mr. Druce, but Dougal, the indirect cause of the murder, evades the crime.

Mr. Druce first becomes obsessed with Dougal and pursues him in lover-like fashion. Convinced that his mistress Merle Coverdale is in league with Dougal (she has been typing an autobiography for him) and really hating her (as shown by his determination to pinch, bite, and bruise during the act of lovemaking), he stabs her nine times in the neck with a corkscrew and kills her; he then puts on his hat and goes home to his wife. This ultimate gender maltreatment counteracts the very opening lines of *The Ballad* to Humphrey Place's returning visit to Dixie:

⁷ Christianson indicates that Spark wrote *Ballad* within Scottish traditions as seen in the ballads, in Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Death, betrayal, and duality are the major motifs. See, Christianson, Aileen. 'Muriel Spark and Candia McWilliam: Continuities'. *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*. Eds. Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2000), pp. 95-110 (95). And, Christianson, 'Certainty and Unease in Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*'. *Scottish Women's Fiction: 1920s to 1960s: Journeys into Being*. Eds. Carol Anderson and Aileen Christianson. (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press Ltd, 2000), pp. 134-146 (136).

'Get away from here, you dirty swine', she said.

'There's a dirty swine in every man', said he.

'Showing your face round here again', she said.

'Now, Mavis, now, Mavis', he said. (7)

The return visit at the very beginning of the novel shows the male repenting for the betrayal of his bride. This contradicts Mr. Druce's furious murder at the end of the novel. Mr. Druce's murder, which serves as Spark's final rebuke of a dumb conscious businessman, forms an opposite point to Humphrey's awakening from his previous transgression at the wedding. In *Tales of Love*, Kristeva suggests that misplaced abjection is one cause of women's oppression.⁸ In patriarchal cultures, women have been reduced to the maternal function; that is to say, they have been reduced to production. This misplaced abjection accounts for woman's degradation within patriarchal cultures. Humphrey's confession that there exists 'a dirty swine in every man', not only excuses his flight from the wedding ceremony, but also reveals his recognition that the misplaced abjection is elsewhere made manifest.

Spark mocks Dougal's indifference to all that has happened around him in the novel, except Humphrey's awakening from his improper flight from his wedding. When a policeman repeats that he has discovered a body bearing a scrap of paper with her last name on it, Miss Frierne denies that the corpse is her brother: she doesn't want to pay for his funeral. Imitating a dead man by lolling his head back and making his jaw rigid, Dougal grimly proceeds to send his landlady into a state of hysterics. When Miss Frierne herself soon approaches death by having a stroke, Dougal's moral responsibility becomes even clearer. After the doctor asks him if 'she has got any relatives', he utters a simple 'No' (137)—just as she had recently done when asked if the dead man was her brother. Miss Frierne's sick body has been dismissed as a corpse; her corpse ultimately becomes Dougal's object of abjection.

⁸ Kristeva, Julia. *Tales of Love*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 374.

Dougal leaves for Africa with the intention of selling tape-recorders to all the witch doctors. 'No medicine man', Dougal said, that these days can afford to be without a portable tape-recorder. Without the aid of this modern device (one that may easily be concealed in the undergrowth of the jungle), the old tribal authority is rapidly undermined by a mounting skepticism (142). The arts finally kill modern civilisation, because they are abused as part of the humanising power of modern skepticism; they are no longer seen as part of harmonious human relationships. On his return from Africa, Dougal becomes a novitiate in a Franciscan monastery:

Before he was asked to leave, the Prior had endured a nervous breakdown and several of the monks had broken their vows of obedience in actuality, and their other vows by desire; Dougal pleaded his powers as an exorcist in vain. Thereafter, for economy's sake, he gathered together the scrap ends of his profligate experience—for he was a frugal man at heart—and turned them into a lot of cock-eyed books, and went far in the world. He never married. (142)

Dougal's most obvious ties are to the devil; however, in this capacity, he is never a fully convincing figure. Dougal's personal descriptions are as varied as the perceptions of him that are held by various townspeople. At different times, he both concedes to being and denies being a devil. He is capable of an ambivalent posturing: '... posed like an angel on a grave' (30). Dougal also claims powers of exorcism, which, he insists, do not contradict his claim to be devil as well. At yet another time, he is no devil but admittedly one of the wicked spirits for 'the ruin[ation] of souls' (77). The true nature of Dougal's identity cannot be verified. His protean identity becomes his primary role in Peckham and gains mythic proportions in the book, proportions that surpass those of ordinary mortals. Dougal, the Satan character, becomes an author who achieves success through 'cocked-eyed' books. Spark's few comments on fiction writers in this novel are revealing.

The autobiography of Miss Cheeseman, as written by Dougal, contains lies that

are themselves fictions. A devil who writes 'cock-eyed' books is a successful author. Dougal, walking through the tunnel on his way out of town, juggles six shinbones from the excavations. He is as cynically playful with the psychological relics of Peckham's demoralised citizens as he is with the bones of the long-dead nuns. Most of the people to whom he offers 'vision' are about as inert as the excavated skeletons and they do not resist him. He operates just like a magnetic, attracting his homogeneous followers. The flaw of Peckham's citizens is a fear of the proximity of illness, but they cannot confront this flaw on their own. Although Spark maintains a certain emotional distance from her characters, there is a great deal of subtle compassion implied in *The Ballad*. Inert and petty though the concerns of the Peckham community might be, the moral fragility of people under Dougal's manipulation is quite threatening. Evil is finally driven away by the honest presence of an abject mental state (disease and frailty) and Dougal's deceiving vision, his eye, is battered with a bone after he contemptuously juggles the bones of Peckham.

7.2 *Giving Life to Darkness, The Monstrous and the Human*

Spark has discussed the novelty and success of *Frankenstein* as a fictional genre, praising its horror element to a most sinister degree.⁹ However, she also criticises *Frankenstein*'s many faults, such as the weak chain, the poverty of characterisation, the rigid timing of the plot.¹⁰ She seems to agree that the reproaching voice about punishment results from mankind's inner evil, but disagrees about the way those

⁹ See Spark, Muriel. 'Frankenstein'. *Mary Shelley*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Modern Critical Views. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), pp. 11-30.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25

characterisations of evil are being manifested: they are too realistic in appearance and too terrifying. Regarding the nature of the inner evil shown in *Frankenstein*, Harold Bloom remarks that the major theme of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a reaction against Prometheanism, for Prometheanism overvalues the romantic spirit in consciousness despite all costs.¹¹ He considers that just as Prometheus deserves punishment from God for stealing the fire, so Frankenstein deserves the monster's conscientious punishment for his disobedience towards God's rule. In other words, he disdains that kind of romantic spirit which accuses the divine benevolence of a vindicated murder. I propose that if Spark also praises the reasonable punishment of mankind's internal evil, she has then successfully revised the realistic emergence of the monster in the *Frankenstein* monster as a more *humanised* devil character in people's lives. Spark encourages a subversive romantic spirit to disturb the routine of veiled hypocrisy. She believes that the real romantic spirit should carry with it humanity, and she urges people to confront those things by which they are oppressed and which they immorally want to suppress. I believe that it is through her assertion of a *realistic* description of mankind's devilish motives (in the psychological construction of a self borderline) that Spark tends to make against the nineteenth-century realistic narration of an external materially-mixed monster who leads humans to substantial destruction in *Frankenstein*. *The Ballad* deviates from the fantasy / reality of *Frankenstein* because it foregrounds a belief that psychological motives create our perceived reality, rather than that the empirical monsters generate our torturing trauma.

Like some of the greatest verse-ballads, Spark's prose *Ballad* has a supernatural participant. After discussing the devil, Dougal Douglas asks Humphrey Place to feel the little bumps on his head and explains that he had them removed by a plastic

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Bloom, Harold. 'Introduction'. pp. 1-10(8).

surgeon who, 'did an operation and took away the two horns' (77). In closing, the novel restates the ballad motif by indicating that the world as we see it is not all there is. Humphrey is aware of Peckham Rye 'for an instant looking like a cloud of green and gold, the people seeming to ride upon it, as you might say there was another world than this' (143). The evil disturbance at the very beginning and the otherworldly tranquility at the very ending of the novel, foreground the central motif of life and death are evil as they prevail upon the external and internal. This life/death motif, so symbolical of reality/fantasy, motivates me to attempt a new approach to Spark's text in *The Ballad*. I would like to read her work from a wider postmodern / poststructural perspective, rather than from a merely feminist point of view. Postmodernism, with its emphasis on intertextual games can, as I hope to show, offer ethical and gendered readings of this novel.

Death is only one conventional solution to the narrative's need for closure and it provides a sense of an ending both in *The Ballad* and *Frankenstein*. Although nineteenth-century realism will often strenuously deny or admit it only with a resigned and world-weary irony, there is still at least the narrative possibility of living happily ever after, an ending offered by countless folk tales and suggested by comedy and romance. Domestic tranquility serves as a proper ending to literary plots because it represents repose and stability, even stasis; it is what gets disrupted so that a narrative can be produced. In nineteenth-century realism, narrativity and domesticity stand in opposition, each coming into being only at the other's expense.¹² Such opposition is an organising principle in *The Ballad*. What remains different, however, is that nineteenth-century realism attributes credible moral judgments to the fictional narrator's voice which might represent the author's belief (such as Robert Walton's traumatic witness and frank confession in *Frankenstein*), whereas Spark's realistic

¹² Morris, Pam. *Realism. The New Critical Idiom*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 86.

move in *The Ballad* provides the ironic effect of the characters' moral values in their dialogues directly to the readers. *The Ballad's* episodic conversations spin out with untiring dialogue, story after story of heightened experiences that take place in the earth.

Dougal in *The Ballad* encourages the workers of Peckham to absent themselves from their factory so as to discover a spiritual alternative to their workplace. His suggestion that workers take Monday off as a holiday (39), ironically encourages a running joke about the morality or immorality of such 'absenteeism' (84). He exposes the emptiness of those he encounters and appears ironically to be more rounded than his ostensibly realistic counterparts. Although what he offers to the workers of Peckham are only pieces of clichéd advice, his diabolic phrases offer great insight. He is constructed by the kind of phrases that he is collecting for use in his ghost-written autobiography of Miss Cheeseman, a retired actress. When the electrician Trevor Lomas steals Dougal's notebook, he finds phrases like 'I thrilled to his touch', 'I reveled in my first tragic part', and 'We were living a lie' (91). Dougal has picked up some of these lines from his acquaintances in Peckham, but does not, himself, have a significantly contrasting idiom. He offers such phrases to everyone. He is trying to rewrite a glamorised story of each person's life—not just Miss Cheeseman's—and to then sell each person that story. Dougal seems to have written a book (he claims to be psychic) like the one Mr. Druce keeps in his desk, *Marital Relational Psychology*. Even before Mr. Druce shows Dougal the book, Dougal has spoken about such concept, imitating a marriage counselor, 'There is some question of incompatibility, I should say' (65). He then continues with an ego-inflating jargon: 'You have a nature at once deep and sensitive, Mr. Druce' (65). He does not uncover deep truths about people but his phrase has an ironic effect on his readers because we know that Mr. Druce's egoism carries masculine pride.

In *Frankenstein*, masculinity manifests itself as a complex, syndromic condition that seeks to fulfill itself in heroic self-assertions like Victor's god-like creation of the monster or Walton's groundbreaking voyage to the North Pole. Shelley identifies masculinity as a closed set of behavioural characteristics, all of which evolve in strict opposition to femininity and that develop into a single-minded intention for manly adventure and scientific experimentation. Shelley's male characters experience masculinity as an urgent imperative that originates at the core of their innermost selves. As Walton indicates in the second letter to his sister, however, its exact source and purpose remain obscure:

There is something at work in my soul, which I do not understand . . .
there is a love for the marvelous, a belief in the marvelous, intertwined in
all my projects, which hurries me out of the common pathways of men,
even to the wild sea and unvisited regions I am about to explore.

(*Frankenstein*, 9)

In striking contradiction to their general scientific curiosity, Victor and Walton never probe this mysterious darkness within. It seems as if the heroic idealism of patriarchal masculinity is somehow exempt from moral questionings or scientific analysis, as if it was simply to be taken for granted as a principle of the truth of rationality. According to Shelley, it is this acute lack of self-knowledge—a boyish naivety and a capacity for self-delusion—that propels both Walton and Victor down the path of tragic self-destruction. Experts at penetrating into the recesses of nature to show how the feminine works in hiding places (34), they fail to explore their own interiority and remain blind to patriarchal agendas that not only govern their existence but determine their understanding of themselves, as well as the limits of their own understanding. While scientifically scrutinising, objectifying, and dissecting the world, their inquisitive male gaze never turns inward to reflect upon the nature of its own motivation.

If we equate Dougal with an evilly-seductive character such as Victor, we might also regard the evil-seduced figure such as Mr. Druce as somehow the equivalent of Walton. Victor's scientific endeavour is mirrored in the novel by Walton's voyage, and indeed, to Walton, Victor is, himself, a kind of scientific discovery. The first frame narrative of *Frankenstein* is made up of Walton's letters to his sister. Walton typifies another kind of scientist who is common to the eighteenth century—the voyager or the discoverer who goes in search of new lands and species. We know that Walton finds a history of all the voyages made for the purpose of discovery in his uncle's library and resolves to explore the dangerous mysteries of the ocean. Walton and his crew spot first a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently gigantic of stature and then a sledge pulled by one dog and carrying a human being. Victor is taken aboard and Walton then restores him to animation by rubbing him with brandy. Walton's reanimation of Victor prefigures or reenacts the galvanisation of Victor's monster, but Walton's reaction to the awakened Victor has none of the horror which Victor shows towards the monster: 'I never saw a more interesting creature', says Walton. Walton's pleasure in Victor here represents his imperialist desire to discover others like him throughout the world. The discovery of Frankenstein's monster evokes in Victor a horror towards Otherness as well as a desire to control and enslave it.

We can also discern this desire to enslave (to enslave internal evil and blindness towards the psychic real) through Mr. Druce in *The Ballad*. A deceptive use of words abounds in *The Ballad*, such as in Dougal's interview with Mr. Druce, during which time 'create' has more than one proper interpretation. Mr. Druce tells Dougal, 'we are creating this post' (16), while Dougal is creating different approaches, switching monkey-puzzle tree pose to a professor, to a television interviewer, to a man of vision with a deformed shoulder (16-17). Mr. Druce has no idea how creative Dougal can really be in shifting appearances; the post created for him in turn is a creative one for

Dougal, just as an impact of the monster to Victor in *Frankenstein*. Under the guise of conducting a research, Dougal in *The Ballad* and Victor in *Frankenstein* both misuse their power so as to deceive the people around them into thinking that they are really valuable consultants on workplace issues.

The monster scares Victor because he looks degenerate yet human; manufactured yet alive; mechanistic yet sexual—in the same way that Dougal threatens Mr. Druce because all he sounds transgressive yet alluring. In abandoning the embodied form of his work, however, Frankenstein fosters a horror of the body, a fear of degeneracy and a disgust at the disorder he has introduced within what he once thought to be a neat and perfectible scientific system. Once again, his compulsion to push knowledge beyond certain boundaries produces, in his eyes, ‘a deformed and abortive creation’ (36). Victor feels disgust for ‘the wretch-the miserable monster’ because it represents his unorthodox desires, his scientific heresy, his disassociation from the nuclear family, and his belief in the coincidence of purity and beauty. Victor turns his dismay into a horror of the beast of social disorder and makes his creature stand for all the elements that threaten his status as a middle-class male. ‘The beauty of the dream vanished’, says Victor, ‘and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart’ (57). In naming his experiment ‘monster’, then, Victor hints at the ideological dangers of a theory of evolution. By displacing God with science, belief with technology, a ‘paradise lost’ with a body regained, Victor is struck by the fear of God and Nature and by an even greater fear of the social anarchy threatened by God’s absence. In an attempt to immediately reinstitute a hierarchy and a social order that threatens to disappear with the Chain of Being, Victor reviles his creature as deformed, impure, inhuman; he calls it ‘the malice of the fiend’ (99). In refusing to recognise the creature as human, Victor both limits the definition of ‘human’ and refuses to recognise the part of humanity that is monstrous by placing distance and difference between himself

and his 'vampire'.

For Mr. Druce, Dougal is the vampire who attracts the pleasure of egoism but who demoralises Mr. Druce and threatens his normal existence. What deserves our attention is that while the inhuman fantasy is well-endowed by mankind, men cannot escape from the disastrous. George Levine indicates the relationship between reality and fantasy in *Frankenstein*:

We know that the Monster is a double of Victor himself, and that as he acts out his satanic impulses he is acting out another aspect of Victor's creation of him. God, however, cannot be a rebel; nor can he be Adam or Satan's "double". He cannot be complicit in his creature's weaknesses, cannot be destroyed by what he creates. The whole narrative of *Frankenstein* is, indeed, acted out in the absence of God. The grand gestures of *Frankenstein* may suggest a world of fantasy that has acquired a profound escapist appeal in modern culture, but they take place in a framework that necessarily makes an ironic commentary on them, even while our sympathies are drawn to dreams of the more than human the narrative will not allow.¹³

Operating out of such assumptions, Spark uses literary conventions of the double (Dougal and Mr. Druce in *The Ballad*, the monster and Victor, Victor and Walton in *Frankenstein*) to build our expectations and to involve us therein before she overturns those expectations by including realistic descriptions within larger realities in *The Ballad*. The problem is one of discovering the unique nature of the worker's values in Peckham and of suspending various beliefs. In other words, it is not merely the individual's psychic disease that Spark wants to reveal, but the whole society's disease that she wants to criticise. It is this double-edged mocking and self-mocking that distinguishes the satire of *The Ballad*.

¹³ Levine, George. 'The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*'. *The Endurance of Frankenstein: essays on Mary Shelley's novel*. Eds. George Levine and U. C. Knoepfelmacher. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1979 [1974]), pp. 3-30 (7).

7.3 *The Critique of a Materialistic Society*

I want to focus on narrative structure and linguistic satire in *The Ballad* and in *Frankenstein* in order to mark the injustice of social institutions as the crucial demon and as the central motif of *The Ballad*; this injustice is widely evident in the alienation from domestic affections and in the unconscious male fear of the feminine. First of all the narrative structure colours the parallel between these two novels. Although the monster's narrative is contained within the narratives of Walton and Victor, he does tell the story of his exclusion from the community, of his loneliness, and of his perception of his own criminality. The monster's narrative, in its break with Gothic convention, complicates the politics of monstrosity and draws attention to the fact that monsters are made, not born, and can therefore be perceived in ideological terms. In *The Ballad*, the time scheme of the plot is ruptured into unchronological order such that conversations among characters leave much space for critical thinking among readers.

David Punter in *The Literature of Terror* defines *Frankenstein* and the Gothic as 'form[s] of response to the emergence of a class-dominated capitalist economy'.¹⁴ In his reading of the novel, Punter emphasises the theme of the irresponsible scientist who is committed only to scientific truth and who is intent upon eradicating 'the ugly, the unpredictable and the disruptive'.¹⁵ Punter attempts to ground his study in history and asks why 'symbols of injustice and malevolent fate should be conjured up at a particular historical period'.¹⁶ The answer, he suggests, has everything to do with the emergence of bourgeois culture and with the struggle of that group against aristocratic

¹⁴ Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: a history of gothic fictions from 1765 to the present day*. (London and New York: Longmans, 1980), p. 128.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 125.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 127.

corruption and the threat of the proletariat. It is this institutional injustice that induces human disease; this, I will argue, can be discerned in *The Ballad* as well.

7.3.1 *Alienation in Domestic Affections*

As I mentioned earlier, the boundary between fantasy and reality is often blurred by the undertones of the narrative's uncertainty. Sparker's intention in obscuring characters' idiomatic conversations shows her largest attempt to challenge what we perceive as the reality. Spark uses the 'as if' to create confusion as to what is actual (with the characters' interactions) and what is narrative truth (for the readers to decipher the character's psychology):

As he opened the street door, young Leslie slid in as if from some concealment. . .

Elaine started to sing in the same tone as her screaming, joylessly, and as if in continuation of it.

Did it sound as if I was carrying her upstairs?

Collie blew out his smoke as if it were slow poison. (36, 47, 48, 92)

The ('as if') uncertainty of language opens up the possibilities of the realist observation. Leslie is occupied with the shady dealings; Elaine only appears to sing; Humphrey is carrying Dixie upstairs; and Collie's cigarettes are slow poison. But are these truly happening or just actions that cover these characters' momentary thoughts? By questioning the narrative 'truth', Spark cautions the readers not to judge too quickly. The most evident is the (apparently but ambiguously) devilish character, Dougal Douglas:

Dougal came in just then, and walked with his springy step all up the long open-plan office, bobbling as he walked as if the plastic inlay flooring was a certain green and paradisaal turf. (97-98)

He is associated with the devil throughout the novel but is also ironically strengthened

here by the 'as if'. With his mischievous but malicious advice, he looks happy 'as if' walking in the paradise. By contrast, with decent behaviours following daily routines, the Peckham's residents bear usurping and transgressive desires.

In *The Ballad*, Dougal offers a false initiation, a false holiday—when on the 'holiday' of absenteeism, to relax is to alienate oneself from human affections. On the evening of his Monday off, Mr. Druce and his mistress Coverdale routinely make love. Dixie rebukes Humphrey's effort to act in a similar fashion. Dougal play-acts in the ballroom, rowing, fishing, dancing, all with a trashcan lid as his only prop. It is easy for Dougal to be the devil's advocate in the love affair between Humphrey and Dixie, she but 'seventeen, [and the] daughter of the first G. I. Bride to have departed from Peckham and returned . . .' (10). Dixie pennypinches her way through a meager existence, squirreling away every shilling for a 'spin dryer' and a bungalow; she doles out sex as ungenerously as she spends money—Humphrey spends most of the novel trying to unbutton her coat so they can make love in a closet. Dixie is left at the church altar by Humphrey with words that have been suggested to him subliminally by Dougal:

The vicar said to Humphrey, 'Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?'

'No', Humphrey said, 'to be quite frank, I won't'. (8)

This sardonic view of emotion is typical of Spark. There is no passion in sex and in another so-called romantic relationship—this one dealing with a murder—there is no passion even in killing. Mr. Druce, who spends his Saturday afternoons sleeping with his secretary, Merle Coverdale, thirty-seven and head of the typing pool at Meadows Meade, is as appealing as the brussel sprouts which Merle slowly stews for him.

[They] . . . took off their clothes in a steady rhythm. Merle took off her cardigan and Mr. Druce took off his coat. Merle went to the wardrobe and brought out a green quilted silk dressing-gown. . . . Merle took off her blouse and Mr. Druce his waistcoat. Merle put the dressing-gown over

her shoulders and, concealed by it, took off the rest of her clothes, with modest gestures . . . (53-54)

Not only is his violence stupid, it is also studied and deliberate.

The corkscrew lay on the sideboard. He lifted an end, let it drop, lifted it, let it drop . . . [Then] he came towards her with the corkscrew and stabbed it into her long neck nine times, and killed her. Then he took his hat and went home to his wife. (136)

There is no love in the gender relationship, even in sex. Mr. Druce's fatal flaw—deliberate violence—becomes Spark's sharpest irony in her ridicule of love affairs.

We may also observe a similar irony of love in *Frankenstein*. True to his ambivalent identity as Victor's repressed Other, the monster's murderous rampage not only illustrates the consequences of Victor's emulation of the patriarchal ideal of masculinity, but also his fateful repression of the female and the feminine. Victor fails to love his child unconditionally, to nurture it, and to forgive it all its shortcomings. This failure unleashes violence and destruction upon society. Made up of incongruent body parts, the monster learns to recognise and to engender himself as male only after several painful confrontations with society's perceptions of him. Initially, the newborn monster steps forth into the precarious, highly contestable sphere of both its maker's bride and mother:

I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the graveworms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror . . . when . . . I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created . . . He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped, and rushed down stairs.

(*Frankenstein*, 57)

Victor flees from this horrific vision of a threefold domestic entrapment—from the familial obligations of marital, filial and parental love. Instead of affirming his manly integrity and his independence from the realm of domesticity, Victor's heroic deeds—the creation of the monster—locates him within a complex web of emasculating family relationships. The monster is his child but also, due to its unnatural conception and birth, an unwelcome reminder of the wife and mother whom Victor sought to forget in the process of creation. The monster stands therefore for both Victor's masculine self and for his Other: the feminine and the maternal. Gradually Victor disintegrates, caught up in what is an impossible double bind of feeling simultaneously compelled to pursue and to escape the monster. Victor's effort to prove himself as an unequivocally masculine subject, results in a monstrous creature that symbolises the inherent self-and-otherness of all gender identities. The monster embodies the grotesque and is a loosely pieced together by-product of Victor's idealised, sharply contoured masculinity.

His internal split represents a case of Kristevan abjection as produced by 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'.¹⁷ Significantly, Elizabeth Grosz defines abjection as 'the expression of a contradictory self-conception, one in which the subject is unable to reconcile its (imaginary and fragmented) experience of itself with its idealised image'.¹⁸ After Victor discovers the secret of life by examining corpses in the process of decay, he visits 'the dissecting room and the slaughter-house' to gather flesh and blood for his experiment. In his excitement over his discovery, Frankenstein declares:

Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break

¹⁷ Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: an essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 4.

¹⁸ Grosz, Elizabeth. *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*. (Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Lds, 1989), p. 94.

through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. (52)

Frankenstein, at the beginning of his research, claimed to be searching for a way to banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death. Now, with the secret of life before him, he dreams of discovering a way to 'renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption' (52).

Frankenstein, then, wants to purify the body, to make it disease free, and to produce from out of death a 'new species' exalted above that humanity 'of woman born'. His rejection of his creation stems from a realisation that his creation is neither a purified nor a radically different form of humanity. Rather, the monster is a mottled man, a sutured patchwork of mixed skin and blood, a very spectre of mis-composite that was to prey upon all nineteenth century dreams of purity.

7.3.2 *The Escape from the Female Love*

In the last sentence of *The Ballad* is there a brief illumination of brighter humanity: driving away with Dixie after their wedding, Humphrey observes the Rye community to be peaceful. Humphrey's brief vision has no unifying effect. There is no indication of how Humphrey feels when he sees the bright green Rye. The citizens of Rye are hardly visionaries, and Dougal's parodic posing as an awakener of souls results only in disorder and not in harmonious illuminations. The feminist concern is uttered; the male desire to flee from the wedding becomes symbolical of domestic affections and of the internal union between the masculine and feminine in the lives of men.

The past years of feminist criticism on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* have established the novel as a text concerned with pregnancy, child-birth and parenthood.

In her much quoted essay, 'Female Gothic', Ellen Moers laid the foundation for reading *Frankenstein* as 'a woman's mythmaking on the subject of birth'.¹⁹ In this essay, Moers seeks to answer the question Shelley sets before her readers in her preface to the 1831 edition as to 'How [did] I, then a young girl, c[o]me to think of, and to dilate upon, so very hideous an idea?' In a recent study of Mary Shelley's life and works, Anne Mellor suggests: 'One reason Mary Shelley's story reverberates so strongly is because it articulates, perhaps for the first time in Western literature, the most powerfully felt anxieties of pregnancy'.²⁰ Mellor goes on to define the monster as a product of the nuclear family's failure to mother its children, and she sees *Frankenstein* as a monomaniacal scientist who wants to create a world without women. She writes that, 'by stealing the female's control over reproduction, *Frankenstein* has eliminated the female's primary biological function and source of cultural power'.²¹ By insisting that women's 'cultural power' lies in childbirth Mellor, and other critics, simply tie the knot between femininity and maternity, between the female and nature; they reproduce a static relationship between masculinity and a system of dominance.

Reading *Frankenstein* as a narrative preoccupied with the means by which monstrosity is identified with the foreign, the alien, the ugly, I contend that the monster needs not only represent the negative impact from humans' transgressive desires but also represent 'woman' or the horrors of maternity. If the monster is *Frankenstein's* child, he is also a slave forged out of scientific discovery and a world lacking the ability to nurture. If the relationship between the scientist and his creation suggests social bondage, it is also tinged with the repulsion that nineteenth century science exhibited towards the idea of purity. The monster, in other words, merges

¹⁹ Moers, Ellen. 'Female Gothic' in *The Endurance of Frankenstein*. Eds. George Levine and U. C. Knoepfelmacher. (Los Angeles: California UP, 1979), pp. 77-87 (81).

²⁰ Mellor, Anne. *Mary Shelley: her life, her fiction, her monsters*. (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 36.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

class, race and gender-based anxieties, opposing Otherness to the unity and sanctuary of family. The monster, in this sense, may be identified with the threat of the feminine, the threat, that is, of difference, but also of exclusion from the family and all human community. Frankenstein's monster terrifies his creator and eventually suffers rejection because he represents the combination of all those elements that threaten the hegemony of bourgeois culture.

Caroline, Elizabeth and Justine are joined to one another in a kind of sacrificial circle. Caroline dies nursing Elizabeth back to health, and Justine dies for a crime for which Elizabeth feels at least partly responsible. The same monster that commits the crime for which Justine hangs finally kills Elizabeth. Furthermore, the material evidence that finally convicts Justine is a cameo of Caroline that the boy William wears around his neck. Elizabeth, Justine, and Caroline are interchangeable within a circuit of patriarchal justice. This circuit shields Victor from the consequences of his crime. It is not simply a faculty justice system that allows the women to be punished in Victor's stead—it is the family system itself. This system enforces separate spheres and enables Victor to keep the secret of his scientific endeavours and to bind the woman to a kind a half-life within the home. The sacrificial circle is a construction of the bourgeois family and is not merely the result of a miscarriage of justice.

This satirical tone of the bourgeois family never disappears in *The Ballad*. Humphrey's wedding at the end of the novel, together with Mr. Druce's murder of Merle, designs Spark's satire of the bourgeois family. As Dixie says after her marriage to Humphrey has finally taken place: "I feel as if I've been twenty years married instead of two hours" (143). Dougal seems the cause of a telescoping and intensification of experience in Peckham. Its people have touched and felt the supernatural and been made a part of some design or plot they cannot apprehend. Theirs is now a mythical reality, the sort which lends itself not to factual record but to

a ballad of hazy detail. Humphrey attests in the final scene of the novel to the real legacy of Dougal—a ‘vision’ that changes the very place he knows all too well. As he and his new wife,

drove swiftly past the Rye, he saw children playing there and the women coming home from work with their shopping-bags, the Rye for an instant looking like a cloud of green and gold, the people seeming to ride upon it, as you might say there was another world than this. (143)

This domestic tranquility stands in opposition to the bloody murder of Merle by Mr. Druce. While Dixie survives the communal injustice of the wedding, Merle falls prey to an institutional injustice: consumptive sex.

We may also observe gender injustice in *Frankenstein*. After Justine hangs, Elizabeth relinquishes her sentimentalised view of the world and of the operation of justice. She says:

When I reflect . . . on the miserable death of Justine Moritz, I no longer see the world and its works as they before appeared to me. Before, I looked upon the accounts of vice and injustice, that I read in books or heard from others, as tales of ancient days or imaginary evils; at least they were remote, and more familiar to reason than to imagination; but now misery has come home and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other’s blood. (101)

Separate spheres suggest a naturalisation of gender roles, implying an easy division of human attributes into masculine and feminine, as well as the protection of the domestic space from the crimes of the outside world. The Gothic form narrates the breakdown of all such easy divisions and remarks upon the chaos that results.

Elizabeth finds that the death of Justine for the murder of William brings misery home. When this happens, the family is soon violated by a monster within, by evils that are more familiar to reason than to the imagination and that translate the realm of fiction into fact. Vice is no longer a narrative taken from history; injustice infiltrates morality. The erosion of those boundaries that form her world leads Elizabeth to conclude that

men now all appear as monsters and that she can no longer make distinctions between the two. The strict morality of bourgeois respectability demands that the heroine make proper distinctions if she is to remain pure; when difference breaks down, morality ceases to function and the pure woman faces only death or dishonor. In this respect, the Gothic ruptures respectability only to restore it; the comprehension of injustice, here attributed to Elizabeth, at least suggests at least that knowledge precedes death, and, however briefly, that social awareness replaces innocence.

The rate of symbolic exchange, then, between monster and woman in *Frankenstein*, suggests that gender circulates within a matrix of class and race relations. The female body may represent abhorrent sexuality but it also threatens to reproduce monstrosity in a 'race of devils'. Woman's place in bourgeois culture is defined in contra-distinction to monsters that know and can distinguish men from monsters. Elizabeth's confession that 'men appear to me as monstrous thirsting for each other's blood' seals her fate: she must die rather than participate in more monstrous births. Dougal is born with devilish horns on his head and his final flight from the Rye community also tells us that the discovery of the human disease is very high. The results are violence and death, which, as *The Ballad* and *Frankenstein* seem to suggest, lie somewhere beyond narration, as though the narrative was a means of staving them off. Had the internal monster succeeded in its inventive task, had its persuasiveness outlasted man's provident given, it would have visited upon its inventor the chain of death that finally culminates in his master's destruction.

Frankenstein's desire to create new life—itself the precondition for a whole series of monstrous events that form his 'hideous narration'—is largely a response to the death of his mother, which he feels the first misfortune of his life (40). It is his desire to reverse the most basic plot of all, the ending of life in death, that engenders his scientific discoveries and the horrific stories that they bring about: 'I thought, that

if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time . . . renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption' (52). *Frankenstein* suggests a morphology of narrative texts that makes death the beginning instead of the end. Victor never learns this lesson. He dies still enjoining Walton's crewmembers to seek glory and holding out the possibility that another may succeed where he himself has failed. Enmeshed in a value system that the novel as a whole has subtly painted as troubling, Victor cannot recognize the claims of a community that draws Walton's crew back to England. In the end, the crewmembers are the only individuals to benefit from their endeavors. They return safely to their families, having accomplished what they set out to do: Walton's ship makes it to the pole and back again. Victor, on the other hand, spends his life fruitlessly and produces nothing of benefit either for himself or his society. The sterility of his efforts passes a final, damning judgment on the monomaniacal quest for glory that initially drives him to disdain productive labour, to turn away from community, and to create a creature that he cannot nurture. This is similar to the way in which Dougal fails to take responsibility for Mr. Druce's murder of Merle.

Other survivors of the devastating events in these two novels are also marked for life by their contact (direct or indirect) with Dougal in *The Ballad* and with Victor in *Frankenstein*. We lose sight of Humphrey after Mr. Druce's murder, and Trevor after his fight with Dougal at the ball. In *Frankenstein*, we also lose sight of the De Laceys after they flee from the creature. We do know, however, that their lives are ever-altered by the encounter. The De Laceys survive, but carry deep scars with them into the future. Another scarred survivor is Victor's younger brother Ernest, whom Victor never mentions after the death of their father. In fact, Victor's claim that his entire family is destroyed is untrue: the family revives into the future by this forgotten younger brother. A reader might wonder what kind of a future this brother will have,

however, orphaned and deserted as he is by Victor. Victor is so driven by his monomania that he overlooks the effects that his actions will have upon anybody but himself.

The point here is that tragedy is not a private affair: the fall of one individual leads to the decimation of many. The survivors (Humphrey in *The Ballad*; the elder Clerval, the De Laceys, Ernest Frankenstein, even the crewmembers of Walton's ship and the sister to whom he writes in *Frankenstein*) may initially seem more fortunate than those who die because of man's folly (Mr. Druce's murder of Mere in *The Ballad*; Alphonse, Elizabeth, William, Justine, Henry Clerval, and Victor himself in *Frankenstein*). Yet, much like those in *Frankenstein*, ultimately all characters in *The Ballad* fall victim to disease, to the disease of solipsism and prejudice that is entrenched within and is perpetuated by the strange system of human society that the novel lays bare for scrutiny.

Conclusion

Like most devil figures, Dougal has a physical deformity and makes much of his one crooked shoulder. Spark is a perceptive student of human frailty, however, and she subtly points out how his grotesque form makes him more and not less attractive to the citizens of Peckham. Evil is always attractive in Muriel Spark's novels because it offers an alternative to the mundane routine of existence, particularly to the mind-deadening that occurs in this milieu of typing pools and factory assembly lines. The disrupted daily routine of typing pools that Dougal makes obviously causes less serious trouble than Mr. Druce's murder. We know at the end of the novel that the real evil is the dullness of Peckham Rye. Dougal, whose function here is to jar the

intellectually and spiritually slothful from their well-defined ruts, forces each character, in varying degrees, to re-assess the known. He serves as a force for change even though the results are rarely beneficial. From this perspective, we may say that Dougal is a fallen angel, destroying the abnormal before construction.

Massie suggests that 'Dougal is the element in the psyche that modern industrial society attempts to stifle and deny'.²² Dougal's presence in Peckham gradually exposes injured morale: his 'human research' consists largely in convincing people that they are the tragic victims of life and are therefore entitled to take casual revenge on others. This immoral sense, though seemingly brought to Peckham by Dougal, has long been imprinted on the minds of Peckham residents. He therefore easily undercuts the fragile self-confidence of the residents, including their unquestioned, and never consciously-affirmed values and patterns of behaviour. All these misled moral values and patterns of behaviour, particularly elaborated through gender interaction, lead to tragic murder and comic evasion, much like the often comic/tragic heroic endings in traditional ballads. Dougal frequently assumes the manner of a concerned counselor, a priest, or a psychiatrist in order to encourage people to confess their unhappiness. The most poignant point Spark makes at the ending of the novel is that if people are too numbly bourgeois (as is Mr. Druce) to doubt their own beliefs, then tragedy will entail. Dougal plays a satirical figure who sees to it that Peckham's residents invent some reasons to justify themselves with their demoralising values. Spark's text evinces an uncompromising moral attitude that foregrounds the emergence of a voice that effectively counters the invented world of morality and the gendered world of traditional ballads.

²² Massie, Allan. *Muriel Spark*. (Edinburgh: The Ramsay Head Press, 1979), p. 30.

Conclusion

After examining several forms of gendered subjectivity in fiction by six different authors, I return to my original question: why does gendered subjectivity always rely on its abject? Why can dangerous women not live without the image of sadomasochistic men, and why can female-body-obsessed men not live without the image of a threatening maternal body? Since any gendered subjectivity cannot be released from the psychological rejection of its own exclusivity, the subject and its abject complement each other existentially. Instead of identifying the semiotic aspect of language with femininity, Kristeva identifies it with the psychological 'Other within' and suggests that what is marginalised may be equated to that which challenges totality. Revealing her psychoanalytic training, Kristeva describes such literature as that which allows the semiotic to break through into the text. Those silenced voices are precisely those that may shake the totality. For offering a context for criticism of the Scottish novels which favour the caricature of the marginalised groups historically and culturally, we may realise that Kristeva's view of abjection accounts for the fact that those defying 'ex-centric' moves in challenging the absolute systems and beliefs may not succeed in transforming the marginalised groups into those of the mainstream. Any subject attempting subversion of its abject cannot stand on its own because of its continuous reminiscence of resisting what it denies. Within such a post-structuralist framework, the psychoanalytic approach clearly provides a voice that is sympathetic to such literature and that offers a suitable context in which we can reassess various aspects of the ex-centric.

Kristeva's postulation of the ex-centric voices hidden in the semiotic dimension of language leaves readers much room to interpret a literary work. Regarding the

post-structuralist view about the voices of the ex-centric, we may take a look at Roland Barthes' view about the interaction between the authorship of texts and readers' alternative interpretation. Barthes explores the nature of 'representation' itself in *Empire of Signs*. He indicates that:

The text does not 'gloss' the images, which do not 'illustrate' the text. For me, each has been no more than the onset of a kind of visual uncertainty, analogous perhaps to that loss of meaning Zen calls a satori. Text and image, interlacing, seek to ensure the circulation and exchange of these signifiers: body, face, writing; and in them to read the retreat of signs.¹

The critical importance of the semiotic aspect of the language lies in the fact that it enables readers to create a meta-language that posits multiple levels of signification (that is, a letter, a word choice, an expression of sentence, a punctuation mark) working collectively in relation to a coded text. Barthes' proposal of meta-language is exactly Kristeva's view of the 'genotext' which is embedded in symbolic voices of the 'phenotext' and which shows the drive, or motivation, and desires of pre-linguistic subjectivity.² Unlocking the text suggests the 'translinguistic'³ analysis of cultural texts in literary texts; what deserves our attention, therefore, is the fact that readers are operating within a different cultural context from that of the fictional characters and the authors they are reading. In the previous exploration of the courageous figure of 'dangerous women', we discover a 'speaker' of abjection of either the feminine or the maternal in the lexical text of symbolic order. Through examining the 'dangerous woman's' subversion of the symbolic law, rather we unveil the foreign nature of fictional characters in relation to both the external Other (the subjugated female body) and the Other within (the maternal side of oneself).

¹ Barthes, Roland. *Empire of Signs*. Trans. Richard Howard. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. xi.

² Kristeva, Julia. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller. Intro. Leon S. Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 87.

³ It means other texts in a text. Kristeva calls this a 'translinguistic' doubleness or 'ambivalence'. See Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language*. Ed. Leon Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 65, 69.

The danger that Barthes recognises in myth is the accumulation of meaning within representations of culture and the likelihood of unreflective responses. As Barthes says, this 'ideological abuse'⁴ generates unquestioning faith in the cultural message, reduces differences of interpretation, and limits the excesses of meaning. The cultural representation of 'dangerous women' such as the sexual warrior Judith, historically generates a public acknowledgement regarding how sexually violent and vengeful a woman can be when attempting to justify her actions in relation to sexual or gender abuse. Myth provides interpretative archetypes for deciphering the meaning of the world we inhabit and with a view to revealing the present through the past. This phenomenon is particularly obvious in those socially marginalised groups that animate and translate the mythical faith. This ideological significance should be re-examined in contemporary multi-ethical and political society wherein these marginalised groups often wrestle with identity. As was examined in previous chapters, although 'dangerous women' do not take aggressive measures to avenge themselves upon their society for unfair gender treatment, they cannot substantially release themselves from the imaginary sagas of life-and-death struggles. This existential struggle does not refer to corporeal death but rather to psychological death. The spectacle of wrestling may be effective, but the ideological bent is restrictive. The defying subject cannot do without his/her abject to the end that his/her corporeal victory can never invite the pleasure of his/her existence; this is true even though the modern 'dangerous woman' transgresses cultural restrictions in an attractively seducing way.

If texts by women reveal a 'negative' sympathy towards female emotional imbalance, they also equally express positive sympathy through hostile and denigrating representations of women. With regard to female emotional imbalance,

⁴ Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Selected and Trans. Annette Lavers. (London: Paladin, 1973), p. 9.

Willa Muir indicates:

Apparently, women can be kept in a subordinate position if ignorance of human conduct is imposed upon them as a necessary condition of social approval. It can be inferred that a fearless attitude towards human life is the first essential quality of a free woman.⁵

In an age of proliferating representations, the 'dangerous woman's' conflicted reality draws our attention to her ambivalent existence. Indicative of the effects of myth, the tropes inherent to the 'dangerous woman' become focal points of the contemporary Gothic, a genre inherently fascinated by the dead fragmented body and by the split self. The female, Gothic body, composed of the split self, stands out in horror but in relief in this thesis, since it comes to 'speak' about the male construction femininity's images and about the female protest against these images through the Gothic representation. To analyse these tropes is not to move away from feminist politics that takes race and class into account, but to move towards a more complete understanding of how patriarchal institutions and gender inscriptions are secured and granted meaning. Through this analysis, we can re-examine the complexity of representing both the experience of reality and the reality of experience.

In conclusion, this thesis suggests that the allegiance of these six twentieth-century Scottish women writers rests with a mode of communication that concerns itself with the deviant presentation of gender relationships in postmodern society. Writing from the self-aware, double-fragmented and dissenting grounds of Scottish experience, these six authors collectively launch a challenge to all manifestations of gendered subjectivity; they uncover the textual objects that sustain the boundaries of gendered identity. The postmodern context is one situation that is particularly sympathetic to the radicalism of these six women.

⁵ Muir, Willa. *Women: An Enquiry*. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1925), p. 19.

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